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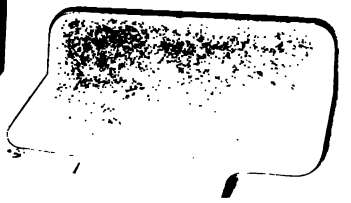


Yours very truly
Henry Duncan

MEMOIR

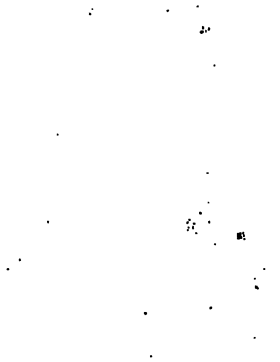
OF THE

REV. HENRY DUNCAN, D.D.

OF RUTHWELL.

Yours Very truly
Henry Duncan

EDINBURGH: WILLIAM GIBSON AND SON'S 1836



MEMOIR

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REV. HENRY DUNCAN, D.D.

MINISTER OF RUTHWELL

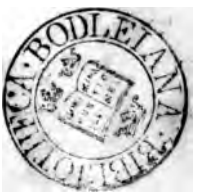
FOUNDER OF SAVINGS BANKS,

AUTHOR OF "SACRED PHILOSOPHY OF THE SEASONS," &c. &c.

BY HIS SON

THE REV. GEORGE JOHN C. DUNCAN,

NORTH SHIELDS.



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PREFACE.

THIS volume does not intrude itself upon the public unsought; and it is humbly hoped there may be found something in its pages to interest many classes of readers. The numerous personal friends of the departed will welcome it, as a memorial of one whom they so sincerely loved and esteemed, while he continued among them. The philanthropist will hail in the Founder of Savings Banks a hearty, unwearied, and successful friend of his species—one peculiarly fitted by nature for carrying out the practical measures of benevolence, to which a heart susceptible of the kindest emotions was constantly urging him. The admirer of "life in earnest," will discover here an apt illustration of the "*hoc age*," with some of its best fruits; and the man of literature and taste will recognise the history of one who could sympathise with his predilections, and expatiate freely in his favourite

fields. Scattered over the whole of the Biography, indeed, there will be seen such traits of sympathy with human nature in its joys and sorrows, its hopes and desires, its wants and tendencies, that wherever the history of HENRY DUNCAN is read, if there exist intelligence and a love of our kind, we may, perhaps without presumption, expect it to awaken interest.

To the Christian especially, will this Memoir be likely to afford pleasing subjects of reflection. The case now brought before him, is not one indeed of sudden conversion or of striking spiritual vicissitude, but probably the less common one, at least in recorded biographies, of a silent and unobserved change, imperceptibly growing into notice, steadily accelerating in its development, and at length, as life with its labours approached its close, ripening into a blessed maturity.

His Life will be found varied by many events; and, for that of one occupying a somewhat remote position, singularly marked by interesting incidents.

In executing this task, it has not been thought inconsistent with the intention of the work to mingle with more grave details, such domestic traits as might render the portrait more faithful, and tend to illustrate the character. Nor has that sensitive delicacy, which in some cases might

have forbidden the publication of private correspondence, prevented the introduction here of letters, calculated, without any breach of confidence, to enliven the narrative, or to leave a salutary influence.

The lives of good men are chiefly valuable from the example which they give of devotion, of wisdom, of courage, or of energy in the best of causes. If *this* may prompt to any duty, or stimulate any aspiration after higher attainments—if it may suggest any new effort, or encourage any necessary sacrifice on the shrine of faith and self-devotion—the best purposes of the work will be so far accomplished. And, the mingled pain and pleasure which the author has experienced in the near review of a Life, all the details of which have for him so peculiar an interest, will be forgotten in a sentiment of gratitude, excited by the thought, that he, whose life was spent in the service of his species, shall, even in his death, have been made the means of promoting the same important object.

North Shields, 1*st July* 1848.

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MEMOIR.

CHAPTER I.

PARENTAGE—EDUCATION—EARLY INDICATIONS—LEAVES HOME.

During the dark periods of Border warfare, the family of Charteris of Amisfield, in Dumfriesshire, held a high place among the lesser barons of Scotland; the head of that house having generally sustained the honourable office of Warden of the Western Marches. A cadet of the family had exposed himself to danger during the troubles attending those rude times, and had been forced by the pressure of circumstances to seek safety in a change of name, and a distant flight. The place of his refuge was sufficiently remote, being no other than the Orkney Islands; and the name he assumed was that since borne by the male line of his descendants, of whom the subject of this memoir was one.

The first of the family who returned to the mainland was the son of a clergyman, who had been settled in one of these islands shortly after the Revolution of 1688, and spent the most of his life, between the beginning and middle of last century, as a merchant

in Aberdeen. His son and grandson, both bearing the Christian name of George, were successively ministers of the parish of Lochrutton, which lies in the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, and a few miles to the west of the town of Dumfries.

HENRY DUNCAN was the third son of the younger of those clergymen, and was born at Lochrutton manse on the 8th day of October 1774. His mother was the daughter of Mr William Macmurdo, a burgess and magistrate of Dumfries; and her grandfather, the Rev. John Macmurdo, of Torthorwald, had been in the ministry so early as the beginning of last century, whose deep and prayerful piety is still spoken of among the families of the district, and whose patriotism during the rebellion of 1715, prompted him to set an example to his brethren, by leading out the men of his parish as volunteers, in defence of the Protestant succession.*

He could thus trace his descent on both sides, with little interruption, through a clerical ancestry, almost

* Tradition reports that other ministers of Dumfriesshire also led out their people on the same occasion, but that none of them acted the soldier like Mr Macmurdo. "Turn aboot, laddies," they would say, in giving the word of command. "To the right about face," was Mr M.'s military translation of the order—emulating the smartness of the regular troops. He is represented as having been an eminently holy man, spending habitually whole nights in devotion, and rising every Sabbath morning immediately after midnight, that he might dedicate the hours preceding public worship to prayer and fasting. The following is the original epitaph on his tomb, which has lately been repaired by his descendants, one of whom is now minister of the same parish. It is not more descriptive than elegant:—

"Hic requiescit D: Joa: M'Murdo V. D. M. grande quondam ecclesiæ ornamentum, ac hujus parochiæ, per XVIII. annos, fidelissimus pastor. Vir solidæ eruditionis, sinceræ pietatis, illibati candoris; vitæ innocentiâ, morumque suavitate, omnibus charus; in verbo divino prædicando præpotens ac mellifluus, Boanerges alter, alter Barnabas. Obiit XIX. Nov. A.D. MDCCXXX. Ætatis XXXIX. Monumentum hoc mœrens ejus conjux, Alisa Chartres, curavit."

to the times of the Covenant; and so numerous were his relations among the Scottish clergy, that he used to compare his family to the tribe of Levi—referring with pleasure to the close and endeared connexion thus existing between them and the Church of Scotland, which was to them in a peculiar sense "the Church of their fathers," and to which he was attached by his earliest associations and tenderest sympathies.

Henry is described by one who knew him from early childhood, as a very engaging boy and a general favourite. With a fine clear but not florid complexion, an open ingenuous countenance, a profusion of golden curls, and an erect and manly air, his personal appearance was highly prepossessing; while his mild and amiable manner, his sweet-tempered, kind, and generous disposition, won for him a way to the good opinion and affectionate regard of all with whom he associated. His talents began to develope themselves at an early age. At school he was remarked as thoughtful and intelligent, fonder of reading than of play, and especially delighting in spirit-stirring narratives in rhyme or prose. Such as those that describe the exploits of Wallace and Bruce, or the sufferings of the Covenanters, and other martyrs or confessors, had for him a peculiar charm.

From an early period, his studies, with those of several of his brothers, were conducted by a domestic tutor, under the vigilant superintendence of their father; and ample scope was thus afforded for the expansion of that poetic and playful disposition by which he was so delightfully distinguished. His younger brother Thomas, now the Rev. Dr Duncan, of the New Church of Dumfries, to whom we are indebted for most of these particulars, became his class-fellow at lessons, as well

as his companion out of school; and in his society it was Henry's delight to rove among the neighbouring hills, or to seek the retirement of the woods and streams, or to linger by the edge of the wild lake that gives its name to their native parish. His lively fancy was seldom at rest during this period of his early history, and already his boyish attempts at verse showed him to possess an ample vein of natural humour and of sentiment. Sometimes he was led to indulge in the satirical, but the kind feelings of his heart checked, by a powerful rein, such sallies as were likely to give pain. Young as he was—for I speak of a period preceding his eleventh year—these productions are said to have evinced a maturity of taste, a refinement of thought, and an ease of diction, which surprised and delighted his friends.

When he and his younger brother could nearly master Virgil, they were sent, under the care of a very kind but somewhat eccentric aunt, to live in Dumfries, that they might attend the different classes of the academy there. The classical department was conducted at the time by Mr Wait, a profound scholar and a severe disciplinarian. Here he soon succeeded in conciliating the good graces of his master; and while diligently striving to accomplish the necessary tasks, showed the native kindness of his heart by encouraging, aiding, and stimulating his younger brother; and so well did he succeed, that they both maintained a place at or near the head of their classes while they continued at this seminary. Out of school he had little ambition to excel in the rougher sports of the play-ground. His active mind was more frequently occupied with the composition of amusing rhymes or *jeux d'esprit*, or with little mechanical contrivances, which gave employ-

ment to his ingenuity, and exercised that peculiar neatness of hand for which he was ever afterwards very remarkable.

In the winter of 1788 he went to St Andrews University, and there resided under the roof of his relative, Mrs Spens, widow of Dr Hary Spens,* the then lately deceased professor of divinity. The classes he attended were chiefly those of languages; and we are assured by a surviving female relative, then a young inmate of the same house with himself, that he gained a high character for steadiness and diligence in his studies. At the close of the session he returned to Lochrutton, where he was joined by his brother Thomas, whose previous winter had been spent in Edinburgh. An incident soon after occurred, which, as illustrative of the ingenious and sentimental turn of young Henry's mind, I shall here introduce. A Virginian nightingale, which he had received as a present, after having been for a while an object of care and affection at Lochrutton manse, met the frequent fate of such favourites—an early death. Henry having resolved to give to his lamented pet a worthy monument, built over its grave a mausoleum of brick and mortar. This erection was constructed by the side of the church road, and adjoining to, or rather surrounded by, the gurgling water of a tiny stream. In the lower part of this erection, and looking down the stream, he inserted an engraved stone, chiselled by himself, representing the face of a man in the very extremity of grief, having the eyes bored so as to give

* Dr Duncan was named after this clergyman, and consequently is found registered as "Hary." He did not change this mode of spelling his name till he had nearly reached manhood, when, to avoid the appearance of singularity, he was induced to substitute Henry.

vent for the constant flow of a small portion of water, intended to represent the mourner's tears. A channel was made to the eyes from behind, by means of the necks of bottles, so disposed as to make, with the ever-flowing water, a moaning sound, which a slight stretch of imagination might construe into a funereal wail. Over this he placed the following epitaph in Latin verse, which he had prepared for the purpose, and engraved on the surface of a square slab of free-stone:—

Sistito, si quando animus, Viator !
Mæsté deploret hominum dolores,
Nuncque corde altum preme lene luctum,
Meque doleto.

Namque surrepta est Philomela, primo
Sub juventæ flore, nec illa, post hac,
Dulci mulcebit, modulans, querelâ,
Vespere sero.

Thus translated by himself (probably at a later period):—

Stay, traveller: if a tale of real woe
To gentle pity e'er subdued thy breast,
O stay ! and whilst my tears do ever flow,
Let not thy rising sorrow be supprest.

For, ere mature her youthful blossom glow'd,
Stern death did lovely Philomel destroy:
No more her pleasing plaints, which sweetly flow'd,
Shall melt to love, or animate to joy.

After the labour of many days, he saw his work complete, and felt, we may suppose, not altogether indifferent to the complimentary remarks of the passers-by, who soon spread a very exaggerated account of the wonders of the monument.

Among those who flocked to view the sight was an

aged female, somewhat deaf, who, seeing the youthful architect upon the spot, thus accosted him:—

"Is it true, sir, what they tell me, that the stane man can speak?"

"Listen," was the reply, "and judge for yourself."

"Troth, I hear it uttering," said the old woman, drawing near, and stooping down to listen; "but what it says I canna tell."

"Look at the inscription over the figure," said Henry; "can you read that?"

She looked, but in vain attempted to decipher the unknown language.

"Na!" she at length exclaimed, "that maun be Latin, or Greek, or ane o' the auncient tongues, and doubtless it's the same language that the greetin' man's speaking. Sirs, what the art of man can do!"

The surmise, if not correct, was, for the time, at least uncontradicted. The "stane man," with his Latin lamentation, was afterwards carried by its sculptor to Ruthwell, and built into a wall of the manse, where it is probably still to be seen.

The following winter we find Henry, with his brother Thomas, again at college in St Andrews. Though but fourteen years of age, he was now to begin the study of logic, in addition to the classics, with a view to prepare him for such literary pursuits as he might afterwards select. As yet it would appear he had given no decided indication of preference for the clerical office, and his father seems to have been judiciously desirous to leave the choice of a profession as much as possible to the option of his sons. Of the progress of the young student in the pursuit of learning at this time we have no record, but a letter of his exists, which throws a very interesting light upon the early character both of

himself and his younger brother. It appears that a short while before leaving home, some maternal command which Henry had received had not been executed, and the reproof administered at the time had made a most painful impression on his mind. It is in the following terms that he vindicates himself in a letter to his mother. The passages in brackets appear as interlineations, in the hand of the younger brother, and were evidently interpolated, with or without his knowledge, before the letter was dispatched.

To Mrs Duncan, Lochrutton Manse.

St Andrews, 2d February, 1790.

* * * * * *

Indeed I was to blame for not obeying you, but there was some excuse for it, I think. Forgive my presumption, dear mother, if I try to vindicate myself, which I could not do when I was at home, because my heart was full, and the tear stood in my eye whenever I attempted to speak about it, and even when I thought about it—not from any consciousness of guilt, but from vexation that you should think me disobedient. You bade me take Tom with me, and go to execute your orders. I went out immediately to the barn to get Tom, for it was very dark. Tom was reading a book; and though I called to him several times, he would not answer me [which, you know, is very common in him.] I knew that you wished us to go soon, and I was rather piqued at Tom's not answering me [and with reason, too, I think], so that I took up a sheaf, and with the end of it touched him on the leg. On this he immediately rose up in a passion [as you know he is very passionate], and upon my asking him again if he would go with me, he said in an angry [and peevish] tone, "No." I said, "But our mother bade." Says he, "I don't care whether or no," [and continued reading his book.] I said again, "But I will go in and tell her." He answered, "You may do so if you please." Upon this I came away in and told you. When you heard I had not done as you desired, you were very angry with me, and said that you had observed this some time that I was grown disobedient, and would not mind what you said to me.

There was never any thing that shocked me so much as these words. I burst into a flood of tears, and went away out. I did not know what to do. I travelled about the fields, without either knowing or caring where I went. At last I came in again, and lay down in my bed, being quite worn out and low-spirited. Afterwards I rose, and went to the door. I stood there some time, and you happening to observe me, came and asked what I was doing, and if I was willing to shake hands, and make up matters. I could not answer, but held out my hand, which you took. You said that you saw I repented of what I had done, and that you hoped I would behave better for the future. I was stung to the quick at your thinking that I was sorry for my fault, for it was not on that account that I was sorry; it was because you thought me guilty of disobedience, which I believed I was not; and I could not help bursting into tears. I went away, to hinder you from hearing me weep, but you followed me, and brought me back. This is a full account of this affair, which I cannot yet think on without the tear starting in my eye. Please tell me in what I had offended you before, to make you say that you had observed my disobedience for some time, and that I would not mind what you said to me. Forgive me, dear mother, if I have said any thing amiss in the foregoing; for if I have, it is only occasioned by my eagerness to clear up this matter. I had never confidence before to mention it, though it has always been present to my mind. [Tom heartily repents of his misconduct, and begs pardon for it. All that has been said of him is very true.]—I am, dear mother, your dutiful son,

H. Duncan.

On his return to his father's house, a proposal was made to him in the kindest spirit by his near relation, Dr James Currie of Liverpool, the biographer of Burns, that he should enter the office of Messrs Heywood, the bankers of that town, where he had procured for him the offer of a place, with a view to prosecute a mercantile profession. The patronage of Dr Currie, who had already assumed the highest place among the literary and philosophical society of that

town, seemed likely to prove most valuable to Henry's worldly advancement, as well as to his mental improvement; and the opening thus provided, which was rendered all the more inviting by the previous settlement of his elder brothers, George and William, in Liverpool, who were now diligently engaged in similar pursuits, was therefore at once accepted. Henry accordingly set out for Liverpool in the summer of 1790. He reached his destination by sea, taking advantage, as was usual at the time, of one of the small vessels trading between the Nith and the Mersey. He was most warmly welcomed on landing by his brothers, and received with all a kinsman's hospitality by Dr Currie, who continued to exercise a kind and careful control over them all. On this occasion he gave characteristic expression to his feelings, in an Ossianic poem, into which he introduced many of his friends under appropriate names, part of which, as illustrative of the early efforts of his genius, is here inserted:—

ALPIN: A POEM.

IN THE MANNER OF OSSIAN.

"Why is the dark eye of grief in the hall? I will soon return to brighten the face of my friends." The tear burst from the eye of Amala.* She pressed my hand in silence. "Thou hast softened the heart of Alpin, O Amala." The red eye of grief is sad. I turned away my darkened face, and the tear of grief fell. The voice of Amala was a cloud of darkness to my soul. "Perhaps I shall not see thee again, O Alpin, till the daughters of death come!" I was silent as the still night, and my tongue was fixed in my mouth. Malvina† stretched out her hand, but I could not give her mine. She attempted to speak, but stifled sighs suppressed her half-formed

* An aunt formerly mentioned, with whom he was a special favourite.
† His mother.

words. Sad and slow I retired. Often do I look behind. My eyes roll in tears.

Still do I see the distant garments of my friends in the wind. But now, O my friends! ye are vanished from my sight, like the sun when he sets behind his hill. The sun will rise again in his gladness to brighten the face of day, but when will you rise to brighten the face of Alpin? You, too, like the sun, will soon drive away the darkness of my countenance. Farewell, friends of my heart! I will soon return with the voice of gladness.

The sails opened their white breasts to the western breeze. I departed, and the red eyes of grief were upon me, till I could be seen no more. The blue hills of my youth vanished slowly, like the mist of morning before the hot beam of the sun. O Caledonia! I go to dwell with the bold sons of the sea.

The mountains of the Saxon appear at a distance like clouds rolled up. Yonder dwells the brother of my heart. Where art thou, O north wind, that thou bearest me not to the red-haired Cathmor.* But thou art with the sons of Ice, freezing the blue lake, or raising the white waves of distant seas. Oh that thou wert filling the sails of Alpin, till the high towers of Revil† should lift their heads!

The red-robed evening was the third time coming down upon the ocean, when we arrived at the port of Revil. The tall ships stood in the harbour like a grove of the lofty ash-trees of winter.

I looked around with the eye of watchfulness. Who is that rushing forward in the joy of his heart? It is Cathmor, the brother of my love. The brightness of joy is on my soul. Come to my arms, my brother. Thou hast brightened my face, O Cathmor! Thou art the morning beam to my heart.

But where are the other friends of my love? A cloud of grief has darkened my soul. Why did I leave the house of my fathers, and the careful eye of my friends?

The house of my fathers I have left, but the careful eye of friendship is still upon me. The parents of my infancy are not here; but ye, O Cuthullin and Clatho,‡ ye are the generous parents of my youth.

* * * * *

* His brother William. † Liverpool. ‡ Dr and Mrs Currie.

The descriptive power, and playful taste, mingled with genuine feeling, in this little sally of the imagination, seem to indicate at once, that the life of a merchant was not likely to be congenial with the temper of the writer.

Yet the providence of God, in bringing him thus early into the busy scenes of active life, was educating him for future usefulness. The knowledge of the world, which he here acquired, his consequent intimacy with the details of business, the practical acquaintance which he made with matters of commerce and finance, were of infinite importance to his future usefulness, when the management of a parish, the temporal welfare of its poor, and the interests of the humbler classes of his countrymen, came to engage, along with other parts of his duty, a large share of his attention and anxiety. It was well that he, who was to distinguish himself by measures of prompt benevolence, in securing sufficient supplies for the wants of his starving parishioners in a time of famine, should have become previously acquainted with the rising emporium whence these were to be drawn; and that the individual to whom his country was to owe the introduction of banks for the savings of the industrious, should be prepared for the proposal of his scheme, by being engaged for several of his most vigorous youthful years at the desk of a banker's office, in a town so busy and so enterprising.

Perhaps the early training usual for what are called the learned professions, is too exclusively studious. Might we not expect men to enter the world, as members of these professions, with minds more attuned to human sympathies, with hearts more open to the world-wide interests of their species, with the ingenuity

better sharpened to devise, and hands more ready to execute schemes of benevolence and philanthropy, were they early introduced, like the subject of this memoir, to such a mingled tide of humanity as flows and ebbs, or boils and eddies, through the exchanges of our great commercial cities. The poetic fire of imagination need not be quenched—it may be fed with materials here, which will make it afterwards to shed a healthier glow on the pages of its inspiration; and the professional talent which is now so honourably active in securing independence for the personal fortune of its possessor, need not be cramped or blighted, but might here receive into its companionship an expansive benevolence, to which the habits of the schools are not always favourable, and which, if but sanctified, would make its owner not more admired for his talent, than loved for his goodness.

Such training may in general be impracticable, and it is believed could never be adopted as a rule for professional men; yet where, in God's providence, it has been realised, the best results have sometimes followed. This had been the case with Dr Currie, whose life, in this respect, resembled that of his young relation; and certainly it was so with Henry Duncan, whose early sojourn in Liverpool, uncongenial though mercantile pursuits were to his temper, he learned, afterwards, to regard as forming a most important era in his history, moulding his character, and preparing him for a useful and honourable career.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE IN LIVERPOOL—CONTROVERSY—ADVENTURES—RETURN TO SCOTLAND.

WHILE resident in Liverpool, though obliged to devote the chief portion of his time to the duties of the office, he was not altogether precluded from opportunities of mental improvement.

The society at Dr Currie's was of an intellectual and refined character, and to this he was allowed the access of a relation and friend. Whatever could interest the imagination, strengthen the mental powers, or enlarge the understanding, was hailed in this circle with characteristic enthusiasm; and from time to time the young banker had the privilege of effacing for a season from his thoughts, the remembrance of day-books, figures, and ledgers, that he might indulge with greater zest in the youthful play of his vigorous mind, and the interchange of thoughts and feelings more congenial to his temper.

Indeed, it would have been impossible for him, constituted as he was, to limit his mental energies to the round of mechanical duties connected with the post he held; and he had not been many months in Liverpool before his own active genius led him to suggest, to several of his companions, the formation of a society for mental improvement. The minutes of the association are still extant, and show that a considerable

amount of youthful talent and taste was called forth by this measure, while they also exhibit Henry Duncan as the chief mover in their proceedings, and the presiding genius at their meetings.

At this time it was that his thoughts were first directed with serious attention to the subject of religion. Shortly after his arrival in Liverpool, the Socinian controversy had broken out with considerable violence. The question of the plurality of Persons in the Godhead, involving the Divinity and eternal Sonship of Christ, the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, and all the infinitely important doctrines that rest on them, came to be the engrossing topics of conversation among the intelligent portion of the public; and sermons, tracts, and speeches on both sides, as is the custom on such occasions, were exchanged by the hostile parties. The enthusiasm of the time communicated itself to Henry. He espoused the Trinitarian side of the argument, and, but ill equipped for such a field, he threw himself into the conflict. His chief effort produced a tract in defence of the orthodox doctrine, the materials of which he had, in part at least, derived from his father's letters, written in reply to his own inquiries on the subject. He published anonymously, and the views he took, and the reasonings he employed, which were at the time new and striking, instantly drew attention. The tract was eagerly purchased, and the inquiry was every where made as to the authorship. His incognito was for a while carefully preserved, and the youthful author, like some others more noted in the world of letters, was often amused by being called to take part in conversations in which his own production was freely handled by speakers who were ignorant of

his personal interest in the subject. His father, among other readers, perused the pamphlet, and discovered to his surprise his own ideas, even his own words, mingled with those of the writer. Scarcely, at first, believing the testimony of his own memory, he at length unravelled the mystery, and recognised his son's hand in the production. The secret thus exposed among his friends, curiosity was succeeded by surprise that a youth of sixteen, as he then was, should have ventured to enter the lists in a public controversy, and should have so well wielded his weapons in defence of truth. A copy of this publication does not seem to have been preserved, which we feel to be a subject of regret.

While thus early and actively training his mind for that course of exertion in which he was afterwards to be engaged, and directing his vigorous attention to the most important of all subjects, he was unconsciously treading the very verge of that hideous error against which he had so promptly armed himself. It is not to be imagined that his motives for entering into this theological controversy arose from any real love of evangelical truth. As yet, indeed, that principle did not exist in his heart. It was prompted, I believe, entirely by the native energy of his mind, which craved exercise, and which was as ready to engage itself in any other field as in that of religion. Nor was he, as appeared, the less in danger of embracing heresy, because he had on this occasion so resolutely opposed it.

The only congregation nominally Presbyterian at this time in Liverpool, was one presided over by a minister who, if not as yet *professedly*, was, as it afterwards appeared, *really* a Socinian. To the church of this minister—allured by the name it bore, but without

inquiring what might be the doctrine preached within its walls—Henry followed his elder brothers. The discourses delivered from its pulpit, however destitute of the essentials of Christianity, were marked by considerable talent. They found a response in Henry's mind, and insensibly he began to imbibe the poison conveyed by them. He had been educated in the knowledge of his Bible, and the great principles of evangelical truth. The Assembly's Shorter Catechism—certainly the most complete, concise, and beautiful compendium of Divine truth which has ever been written—was still perfectly familiar to his memory; and it was, in all probability, his early associations alone which prevented his soon avowing himself an opponent of that very doctrine which he had lately so remarkably maintained. His former beliefs undoubtedly were at this time shaken, and the whole structure of his religious views underwent for a season a radical change. Nor was it till leisure was obtained, some years later, for studying the evidence on both sides more carefully than he had done at this early period, that he became finally convinced and satisfied. His testimony was always afterwards clear and emphatic on the subject. He used to describe the difficulty he had felt at this transition period in reading scripture with a Socinian gloss, and the strange perversion of the obvious meaning of the sacred writers, which during that season he had found necessary, in order to bring them into harmony with the system towards which he felt himself leaning. So strongly did his recollections of these tortuous mental efforts impress his memory, that he used often to state his belief that it is impossible for a Socinian to maintain any real reverence for scripture,

and that the virtual renunciation of the Word of God as an inspired record, must necessarily flow from a system so entirely and obviously opposed to its plainest declarations.

But to return. The labours of the bank were not to be neglected for such speculations. They required punctual attention and considerable activity. Nor were his duties always confined to the interior of an office. It was sometimes his lot to be deputed as a confidential messenger to carry parcels of gold coin to branch banks in neighbouring towns, and he used to relate several adventures that befell him on such occasions, two of which, as illustrating the manners of the time, may be interesting to some readers.

His duty one summer day led him to Warrington, a town about twenty miles from Liverpool, to which he was charged to carry several hundred pounds in gold. Railroads were not as yet invented, and even a stage-coach was a comparative rarity. The mode of travelling was thus left to his own choice; and as the morning rose fair, he hired a riding horse for the occasion, packed his money in rouleaux of paper containing twenty guineas each, deposited these in saddlebags, which, according to the fashion of the day, he slung over his horse, and set out in the buoyant hope of a pleasant and prosperous journey. But, alas! only a few miles had been travelled, when the roar of thunder awakened the echoes; the gathering clouds began to drop, and the rain soon fell in torrents, wetting him to the skin, and, what was worse, soaking his saddlebags and loosening the paper envelopes in which his money was contained. The guineas shook in their leathern inclosures, which at length yielded to the friction; and before the rider could arrest the

mischief, a shower of gold poured down the smoking sides of his horse, and mingled with the mud which already thickly covered the road. He instantly dismounted. Fastening his horse to a tree, he diligently set about recovering his treasure, and having succeeded tolerably well, he had just begun to make a narrower scrutiny, when he was accosted by an old woman whose appearance showed her to be a vagrant. She began, unasked, to aid him in the search, but her assistance was not coveted, and the banker's clerk gave her a civil but very intelligible intimation that her services could be dispensed with. He then rode forward a few hundred yards to a turnpike gate, where he asked and obtained from the gatekeeper the accommodation of a private room. Here he counted over his gold, and found to his dismay that he still wanted eleven pieces. In considerable agitation he returned to the spot, but not to find matters as he had left them. Ten or twelve men had already mustered upon the road, and were prosecuting a search after the lost treasure with the greatest eagerness. The mud had been literally raked with their fingers for some hundred yards, and he could not doubt that they were already in possession of a portion of the missing gold. He asked if they had made any discovery, but the only reply he received was a volley of imprecations. He had insulted and maltreated, they affirmed, an old helpless woman, who only sought to serve him; and if he did not speedily leave the place, they were ready to take signal vengeance. Not knowing well how to obtain redress, he returned to his former shelter. While deliberating on his loss, six of his guineas were brought by the finders, and offered to him for a trifling reward, which he gladly consented to give, not

questioning too narrowly whether he had received a faithful tale of what they had gathered, and rejoicing that his loss was not greater than he could easily supply.

On another occasion he found himself heavily laden with bank gold at the ferry at Birkenhead. The sun was down, and the night tide only quarter full. The usual ferry boats had ceased to ply for the day, and it was necessary to hire one for his own accommodation. Carrying the saddlebags, in which his money had been again stowed, over his arm, he proceeded across the soft and slippery beach to the point where he must embark, but soon found to his annoyance that he was not to be the only passenger. A rough-looking man of powerful proportions joined him on the shore, who accosted him familiarly, entered the boat with him uninvited, and took a seat. Had it not been for the lateness of the hour and the value of his charge, this might not have disturbed him; but the man had a sinister aspect, and the state of the tide made it necessary to land two miles above the town, at a spot made desolate by the vapours of a chemical work, which had banished to a distance the abodes of men. The boat drew to land. The intruder leapt ashore; and Henry, shouldering his heavy baggage, paid his fare and also landed. The two walked together towards the town for a few hundred yards, when with great apparent politeness his companion remarked, that the load seemed heavy, and he would be glad to relieve him of it for a little. Now, thought he, my fears are realised; he held for a moment his treasure the tighter, and declined the offer, remarking with constrained thanks, that he felt the weight no incumbrance. "Come, come," was the rejoinder;

"don't make a mystery, man, of a very plain affair. I know you very well, and I know the errand you are on: you are carrying gold to Heywoods' from Chester. Give me the bags; I am as honest as yourself." The thought flashed through the young man's mind—it was characteristic of the calmness which in agitating circumstances he always exhibited—'If I refuse, he is much stronger than I, and can rob me in an instant; but if I give up my load quietly, I shall have the advantage of being in a better condition to pursue him and give an alarm, should I find that he intends to make off with it.' Thus inwardly satisfied, he accepted the offer apparently as frankly as it seemed to be made. The dreaded bandit conveyed the ponderous load in safety to the turn where their roads parted, and then handed it over to him, and wished him good-night.

In telling these anecdotes, he used to remark, that he never was called to such duties without an adventure more or less interesting; and though he was so fortunate as never to be robbed, and never, except on the single occasion first mentioned, to lose any of his money, these events, no doubt, contributed to inspire a salutary caution, and to open to him a new vista for the observation of men and manners; thus preparing him for the life of activity and usefulness which he was afterwards to lead.

Life in Liverpool, however, varied though it was by such pursuits and duties as those which have just been noticed, was, in its general character, but little suited to Henry Duncan's genius. Though he had no reason to complain of the ennui of idleness in his office, still the duties to which he was called from day to day, had nothing in their nature suitable to the literary

turn of his mind, and above all were entirely uncongenial to the native benevolence which formed so large a part of his character. He fancied he saw here before him in his future years, only an unceasing round of activities and anxieties for the attainment of one object, and that, to his mind, a very selfish one —the possession of money. In order to this, he must in a great measure sacrifice books and leisure, sympathy and sentiment. No field appeared open to him, in the life he had chosen, for the healthy play of those expansive affections which began to crave a sphere for their exercise; and he felt discouraged by the growing conviction, that he never could acquire a taste for the pursuits to which he had bound himself. Besides, he had seen in the mercantile society to which he had been introduced in Liverpool, enough to convince him of the utter worthlessness of money as a means of conferring happiness. He used often to tell the story of a successful merchant of his acquaintance, who, after having acquired great wealth, had retired in advanced life to enjoy at his luxurious rural seat the fruits of his early industry, expecting to partake of true happiness during the remainder of his life; but who found that habit had rendered him so incapable of satisfaction in a life of ease, that the only means within his reach of avoiding wretchedness, was to return to the labours of the counting-house and the excitements of 'change. To what end, then, should he continue in pursuits which he disliked, and which promised so inadequate a reward? To say that the glow of patriotism already animated his soul, and that to be useful to his fellow-men seemed to him the only thing worth living for, will apply better to his character a few years later in life; but the stirrings

of that public spirit which he afterwards so largely displayed, his ardent love of literature, and his contempt for wealth—except, indeed, as a means of usefulness — furnished, certainly, his chief motives for desiring to leave the engagements of a mercantile life, and to enter the ministry in the church of his native country.

Previously to his taking any step in this direction, he had ceased to feel a lively interest in mercantile pursuits, and Dr Currie had written to his father a letter expressing some disappointment with the late development of Henry's character. He was pained to observe a certain carelessness in matters of business, and, as contrasted with one of his elder brothers, a distressing "absence of ambition." He alluded with disapprobation to the part he had taken in the Socinian controversy, and urged the necessity of a paternal remonstrance on the subject. It was evident that Dr Currie had failed to discover the springs of his young friend's character, and to estimate its real value; for, had he succeeded in arousing that worldly ambition, the absence of which he deplored, and in checking that salient spirit which urged him to appear so early on the field of public controversy, he might perhaps have made him an eminent merchant, or a millionnaire banker; but Henry Duncan would probably never have stood before his fellow-men as the unwearied friend of the poor, the enlightened promoter of every practical measure for the amelioration of the condition of his countrymen, or the venerable asserter of that glorious "liberty, wherewith Christ hath made his people free."

The following letter explains his feelings at this period:—

To the Rev. George Duncan, Lochrutton.

Liverpool, 4th September 1793.

My Dear Father—I sit down to address you on a matter of great importance to me, as your assent or disapprobation will fix my destiny for life. From the eagerness with which I seized the offer Dr Currie was so kind as to make of my coming to Liverpool, and from the pleasure I felt in laying aside all my former studies, I must with justice be charged with an unsteady and changeable disposition, when I declare my design of returning to the pursuits I have foolishly forsaken. * * * But I do not repent of my conduct, as it is not yet too late to retract; and perhaps the acquaintance which, by coming to Liverpool, I have gained with the world, may more than compensate for the time I have lost to literature. * * I feel that I could return to my studies with tenfold ardour. Indeed, I feel within myself a great desire for knowledge, and in my idle hours am never happy unless engaged in some literary pursuit. * * *

As to my present situation, I have no actual dislike to it, but I do not feel interested enough in the business to derive any pleasure from it, and to discharge my duty as I ought to do. My disposition is entirely different from what a merchant's ought to be. A merchant in general thinks of nothing but how to make money; his chief delight is in hearing of the safe arrival of some vessel, or the advantageous sale of his goods. All literary attainments or pursuits, from which no pecuniary advantage is likely to be derived, such a man despises as useless, and even hurtful. Besides, the continual cares and anxieties which a mercantile life is exposed to, would be to me by no means compensated by whatever fortune I might in a length of years amass. My disposition, on the contrary, gives me no relish for more money than will support myself, or be useful to my friends. Only the first of these, I am aware, can be attained by pursuing my former line of study; but I am also pretty confident that I could acquire no more by being a merchant, else I could willingly give up my own pleasure to be of service to my friends. The ease and contentment which a clergyman enjoys would be no allurement to me, if I thought that the interests of my friends would be promoted by my con-

tinuing in business. * * * I leave it entirely to you, convinced that you will agree to whatever appears to be best. Dr Currie will write you to-morrow by another frank, and give you his sentiments on this business. When you receive them, I shall expect an answer, as I shall be impatient to hear what you intend to do with me. * * * I am, my dear father, your dutiful and affectionate son,

H. DUNCAN.

In this letter was inclosed a sermon written by himself, which he sent to enable his father to form some idea whether or not he possessed what he calls a "parsonified diction," and in which he says he "did not study to advance any thing *new*, it being *contrary to the practice of ministers to do so!*"

The serious reader will observe, perhaps, with pain, the levity apparent in these last expressions, and may be disappointed to perceive that in the motives for this change there is not one wish connected with God's glory, or the good of souls. The truth must be confessed, that at this time he appears to have been altogether a stranger to such springs of action. The signs of conversion in his case are not to be looked for in the earlier stages of his history; and in choosing the clerical life, there seems to have been nothing spiritual even mingled with his motives. The literary ease which the ministry seemed to offer him, the opportunities sure to arise of usefulness to his fellowmen, and the means he hoped to find of indulging the philanthropy of a heart which God had made susceptible of the most generous impulses, were evidently his chief inducements. For these he sacrificed a sphere, offering at the time to worldly ambition the highest prizes. The band of youthful companions whom he had gathered together, and among whom he had formed some interesting friendships, he left with-

out envy to pursue a career from which some of them afterwards retired with princely fortunes. The field which he preferred was one on which no such acquisitions were to be made, where a humble competency alone invited his ambition; but where taste, and books, and benevolence beckoned him with smiles, which he found to be irresistible. His father, by Dr Currie's advice, but with some natural hesitation, acceded to his wishes, and allowed him to return to Scotland, after three years spent in Liverpool, in time to join Professor Dugald Stewart's class of moral philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, in November 1793.

The following passage is extracted from a letter of Dr Currie's, addressed to the aunt already mentioned, which followed him a few weeks later:—

"I am glad you think Harry in some respects improved. He is, indeed, a very fine young man, and I hope his time is not thrown away. I have not observed much *Anglification* about him, nor have I wished to see much. I like nothing so little as the awkward attempts of a Scotsman to be an Englishman. What comes naturally, where the disposition is a fine one, is always attractive in manners; and in this point of view Harry's manners appear to me extremely engaging."

CHAPTER III.

LIFE AT COLLEGE AND IN THE HIGHLANDS—LICENSE—THREE INVITATIONS—PRESENTATION TO RUTHWELL.

Of the five years that immediately follow, the first and the two last were spent at the University of Edinburgh, the other two at that of Glasgow. While attending the class of Professor Stewart, he occupied a high place in the good opinion of that eminent philosopher, from whose valuable lectures he no doubt derived both pleasure and instruction; but it was to Professor Millar of Glasgow, whose prelections on government and law seem to have exercised the most powerful influence on his opening faculties, that he used to trace the earliest development in his mind of some of those principles of action, by which, in after life, he was habitually governed. His interest in the study of theology seems to have been very small, which may in part be accounted for by the dry and unimpassioned character of the instructions then given in this department. He found scope, however, for his intellect, in exercises suited to his natural disposition, and continued an early habit of writing, for his amusement, poetical epistles, satires, and epigrams. Among the young men who, during his last two sessions at Edinburgh, sat with him on the same forms, were the lamented Leyden, in whom he found a kindred spirit; Mr William Gillespie, a man of real

genius, and the author of several poetical pieces of considerable merit, who became minister of Kells, in Galloway; and Mr Robert Lundie, the future minister of Kelso, whose sprightly wit and fine talents, joined with a generous and warmly affectionate nature, finding in Henry Duncan congenial qualities, soon united the fellow-students in bonds of brotherhood, which drew them into closer union the longer they lived; and after more than thirty-five years of intimacy, made the survivor one of the sincerest of the numerous mourners who surrounded the grave of his friend.

On the 28th March 1797, he entered the Speculative Society of the University of Edinburgh, and continued an active member during the following session, which was his last at College. The discussions here at this period, gave scope to the aspiring genius of more than one of those who have since written their names on the page of history. The records of this society have been lately printed, and in the chronological list of members, the name of Henry Duncan is immediately succeeded by those of Henry Brougham and Francis Horner; while at a short distance below these, among names more or less known to fame, appears that of Lord Henry Petty, the present Marquis of Lansdowne. It could not but be of essential value to our student to be brought into close contact, in this small and select society, with youths of a texture of intellect so superior, especially as the mode of conducting their business, and of framing their debates, was excellently calculated to call forth the latent powers of the members, and to stimulate their energies. One thing in the arrangements appears to have been very important, namely, that ample scope was given to each for indulging his

peculiar tastes, and exercising his talents in such a field of literature as might appear to himself most desirable.

Returning in the spring of 1798 to Lochrutton, he was taken on trial for license by the presbytery of Dumfries, and, after the usual course of examinations, was admitted as a probationer, licentiate, or preacher of the Church of Scotland. It may be necessary, without entering into details, to explain to English readers, that the practical effect of this license was to place him in circumstances for receiving, at some future period, a patron's presentation to a living, on which he might be inducted by the presbytery as a parochial minister. In the meantime, he was *at liberty to preach* wherever he might be invited by any of the clergy, and theoretically was considered to be "*on probation* for the ministry."

As an opening in the Church did not immediately present itself, he undertook in the meantime to superintend the studies of the two sons of Colonel Erskine of Mar, during their father's absence in foreign parts, occupying with his charge that gentleman's mansion of Dalhonzie, near Crieff. During the months spent in this sphere, he found, in the popular excitement of the time—a French invasion being confidently expected—the means of active exertion at leisure hours among the loyal inhabitants of that Highland district. Entering zealously into the humour of the day, he became for the time the Peter Hermit of the district, in summoning the inhabitants to arms—he took every opportunity of addressing himself to the patriotic sympathies of the Highlanders—he even adopted the Highland garb—and, by otherwise suiting himself to their primitive tastes, established a place in the

affections of the people of the district, which enabled him to command for the government their unanimous and hearty support. His love of the humorous found here a subject sufficiently attractive; and an anonymous poem, satirising good-naturedly the various characters engaged in the military agitation of the place, in which he introduces himself as

> "The young Lowland Highlander—
> The merry grave soldier divine,"

was freely circulated in the neighbourhood.

His military zeal does not seem to have interfered, however, with the popular belief in the sanctity of his clerical character. Superstition still lingered in these regions, and on one occasion he was entreated to visit the house of some aged ladies, with a view to lay a most troublesome spirit, whose unwearied efforts seemed to be addressed to nothing else than the annoyance of these helpless spinsters. With more regard to the calls of kindness and sympathy than belief in his own ghostly powers, he consented to do his best, and had the happiness, by means less accordant with his ministerial than his military status, to banish effectually from the haunted dwelling all traces of supernatural agency. He has given a very exact account of this transaction as part of the story of his "Cottage Fireside," a little work of which we shall have more to say at a future period.

Thus his active mind added to the duties more immediately demanding his attention, whatever the time or the place seemed to require. These pursuits, it must be allowed, but ill accorded with his views to the ministry, yet it was while thus occupied that the opportunity of entering on a field of clerical duty first

presented itself. The parishes of Lochmaben and Ruthwell—the former being a royal burgh, and both under the patronage of the Earl of Mansfield—became, in the spring of 1799, simultaneously vacant. Applications on behalf of Mr Duncan were made for each by different friends, and his Lordship gave favourable replies to both, remarking, that if the one Henry Duncan was identical with the other, he might take his choice of the two parishes. At the same time, a congregation of Irish Presbyterians made overtures to him. Thus, like Paris of old, he found it his only difficulty to make a wise selection. The Irish invitation, though in some points worthy of consideration, he soon decided to decline. Lochmaben offered the largest stipend; and what, to some minds, would have seemed of greatest importance, presented, in its corporate privileges, a field for political influence, from which shrewd worldly men had learned to derive personal advantage in various ways. It was, moreover, a presbytery seat, and the petty metropolis of a district. Its situation, too, was very attractive, in the midst of a highly cultivated country, and overlooking several lakes, whose romantic beauty is much celebrated; and all who know how enthusiastic was his admiration of nature, will acknowledge that to such a consideration he could not have been indifferent. Ruthwell, on the other hand, was a country parish, presenting nothing to distinguish it. With a yearly stipend at that time amounting to something less than L.100, which, however, was afterwards greatly augmented, it offered no advantages of neighbourhood or of scenery, and in comparison with the other, was, in the general estimate, decidedly inferior. Yet, having deliberately weighed the advantages attending the acceptance of

each, he chose the latter. The *absence of ambition*, of which Dr Currie had complained, received here a striking illustration; for the chief consideration which decided the preference was, that in Ruthwell he should enjoy the delightful retirement of a rural parish, where his taste for reading might be freely gratified—make his flock, in all its families and individuals, his personal friends—and, free from the jarring influences of politics, either local or national, should have it in his power to follow out the one great object to which he was now ready to devote himself—the improvement and happiness of a people, who should confide in him as their pastor, and lean on his willing services as their disinterested and unwearied benefactor. On these grounds he made a choice which fixed his lot in life among the obscure inhabitants of a distant parish, where the opportunity of being useful in the way least likely to be celebrated, seemed to promise him a life of the purest happiness that mortal could enjoy. I am not entitled, alas! to say, that his views, even at this time, looked much beyond the present life. If the eternal welfare of his flock occupied any considerable share in his thoughts, I fear it must be confessed that the hope of advancing these interests rested chiefly on the influence he might possess in cultivating their kind and benevolent affections, in promoting a social and friendly spirit among their families, harmonising their differences, rousing their patriotism, and becoming their example in all that is amiable, worthy, and honourable. Such seems to have been his *beau-idéal* of a country minister's life; and if he could live to promote these purposes, he does not seem to have questioned that he should amply fulfil all the purposes of a Christian ministry.

His first act, in connexion with the presentation to Ruthwell, as it demonstrated his generosity, conciliated at once the best opinion of his future parishioners, and made a way for him to their affections. Mrs Craig, the widow of the former incumbent, was of course now about to retire from the Manse, which for many years her family had occupied, and, with her daughter, a young unmarried lady, intended to take up her residence in a cottage which had been built for her in the parish, hard by the village of Clarencefield. At such a season, the sympathy of those who can feel for the distress of others could not fail to be peculiarly acceptable; and it will be easily understood how gratefully the widow and fatherless must have felt an act of spontaneous kindness, such as that which the following letter from the youth, who was now about to succeed to their home and income, thus modestly announced:—

To Mrs Craig.

Dalhonzie, near Crieff, 23d January 1799.

Madam,—You have probably heard that Lord Mansfield has presented me to the church of Ruthwell. I take this opportunity of assuring you, that it will be my business to make you feel as lightly as possible the melancholy change which a fatal event has occasioned in your situation; and though I have not the happiness of being personally acquainted with you, I hope one day to prove myself worthy of your friendship. The principal reason of my addressing myself to you at present is, to put your mind perfectly at ease with respect to one point, which you may perhaps be in doubt about. I understand that the law with respect to the crop upon the glebe is, that if the incumbent be settled before the crop be taken off the ground, he has a right to it upon paying for seed and labour. Now, as I think it probable I may be settled before that time, I am happy in an opportunity of showing my regard for your character, by assuring you that I am determined to waive in your favour all right I may acquire to the crop you may please to put into

the ground, and to leave you at full liberty to do with it what you please. I claim to myself no merit in making to you this trifling sacrifice. Were I to act otherwise, I should think myself unworthy of being acknowledged as the son of one whom your late husband favoured with his friendship. If there is any other way in which it is in my power to oblige you, I hope you will consider me as a friend, who will be proud of an occasion to prove himself so.—I am, Madam, your most obedient humble servant,

HENRY DUNCAN.

This letter was acknowledged in terms of heartfelt admiration and gratitude by Mrs Craig, who shows in her reply how far this well-timed kindness on the part of her lamented husband's successor was calculated to soothe the grief of a season, so many of whose circumstances were peculiarly sad and depressing. The sacrifice indeed, intrinsically, was not a small one, as the glebe extended to the unusual size of fifty acres; but it was the spirit of genuine kindness which this step evinced that gave to it a peculiar value.

CHAPTER IV.

ORDINATION—PARISH DUTIES—BENEVOLENT EFFORTS.

AFTER a delay which would not have occurred had he desired to secure his legal title to the fruits of that year's harvest, Mr Duncan was ordained by the Presbytery of Annan to the pastoral charge of the parish of Ruthwell, on the 19th day of September 1799, and was introduced to his flock on the following Sabbath by an aged minister of the Presbytery, whose text on the occasion was from 1 Tim. iv. 12, "Let no man despise thy youth." The appearance of the young minister at this period is described as extremely interesting. At twenty-five years of age, his fair complexion, and his slender and active figure, gave him an aspect still more youthful; while his frank address, and the benevolence which always beamed from his open countenance, promised to his people that their intercourse would be distinguished, on his part, by the kindliest feelings.

In order rightly to understand the position in which, as a Christian minister, he now stood, it may be proper to look back on the condition of ecclesiastical affairs at the period of his settlement. A spiritual slumber of the most hopeless kind had, during the progress of a whole century, been settling down on the churches of Great Britain, which had gradually

become deeper towards its close. Whitfield, Wesley, Rowland Hill, and others of kindred spirit, had been raised up to revive the sense of religion and relieve the gloom in England; and in Scotland, Erskine and his colleagues of the first secession, and Gillespie with several who joined him in the second, had, beyond the walls of the Establishment, raised the ancient standard of purity and truth; while, within, a small and feeble band were content to profess, generally with modest diffidence, the respect they still entertained for the evangelical principles and wholesome discipline of the ancient Church of Scotland. The great majority of the clergy had become secular and worldly; and yielded willingly to the domination of leaders, who in their counsels successfully imitated the tortuous manœuvring of political partisanship. Spirituality of mind was sneered at as fanaticism—a profession of zeal for religion as hypocrisy; and, in discussions on moral obligation, Plato and Seneca were, by some, quoted as frequently and deferentially as either the Old or New Testament. Meanwhile, the Universities seemed to emulate the Church in religious indifference; for from the College chairs no voice was heard rebuking the degeneracy of the clergy, or stimulating a new generation to take up and to defend the sacred cause of gospel truth. The intensity of the darkness, however, had, before the century closed, brought into more prominent view such lights as still glimmered in the Church's hemisphere; and in 1796, the excellent Dr Erskine of Edinburgh had astonished the Church by the "fanatical and methodistical step" of founding a Missionary Society in the capital of Scotland! Following this example, some faithful brethren in the country districts had taken great pains to have overtures

transmitted to the General Assembly, supporting missions to the heathen as a most important part of the Church's duty. This proposal appears to have been regarded by the majority of the Assembly, as not only preposterous in a high degree, but so utterly fantastic in its nature as almost to imply, that the parties from whom it emanated ought to be visited by the censure of the Church. The idea was, indeed, boldly expressed by one of the leaders of the Assembly, and, as if the Church approved the sentiment, this very clergyman was next year placed in the Moderator's chair.

These events had occurred only a few years previous to Mr Duncan's ordination; and it will be easily believed, that in so sad a state of affairs, the outward encouragement to zeal and devotion in ministers of the Church of Scotland was not great. Mr Duncan had been accustomed to witness this miserable defection from former attainments, and had become habituated to it. Not a single companion of his own years appears to have been led to take a right view of the awful nature of ministerial obligation; and the spiritual insensibility of the time was, to some extent, experienced by himself. We are not to expect, therefore, that his ministry in its earlier years will be found to have possessed a spiritual character. Still he was deeply sensible of the necessity of diligent attention to parochial duty; and, rejoicing in the hope of being able to lead his people aright by such means as his office put in his power, he entered with exemplary ardour on the various parts of that circle of obligations into which he felt himself now called. The very lowness of the standard of clerical duty then generally prevailing, enhances, by comparison, his zeal.

His first step was to form the acquaintance of all his parishioners. With this view he set out at once,

according to the ancient order of the Church, on the duty of pastoral *visitation*, which included every family, and made him familiar with every individual of his flock. He followed this up with parochial *examination*, a practice truly important for the proper training of the people in the principles of religion. The Socratic method, decidedly the best for effectively conveying instruction, is peculiarly relished by the people of Scotland in rural parishes; bringing to their minds with force and perspicacity, truths which from Sabbath to Sabbath they are wont to hear more didactically expounded from the pulpit; and the writer has often heard among them the remark, that "*one day's catechising is more instructive than many days' preaching.*" The occasional practice of this duty is generally, indeed, acknowledged by faithful Scottish clergymen to be a most valuable auxiliary to the ministrations of the pulpit. Mr Duncan was very sensible of its importance, and to the end carefully followed up what he had thus begun—visiting and examining, each alternate season. He set out also with a very conscientious attention to the visitation of the sick, which till the close of his ministry he faithfully observed.* His method, at the first, must have been very different from

* The Rev. James Grierson of Errol, a valued minister of the Free Church of Scotland, and a native of the parish of Ruthwell, has retained some lively recollections of the early years of his former pastor's ministry. The following is a quotation from a letter lately written by him to the author:—"I remember, in his first visit to my father's family, that he spoke of the honour and obedience which children owe to their parents. He took a deep and constant interest in the homely joys and domestic sorrows of his people. Warmth, tenderness, and kindliness of feeling, were manifest in all his intercourse with them. I cannot speak of the skill or faithfulness with which he dealt with the afflicted, but I have a touching remembrance of his sympathy and kindness. In the third year of his ministry, he visited my father under an alarming illness, and the compassionate inquiry he addressed to me on leaving the house went very deeply to my heart."

that which distinguished him at a later period, when he became more adequately impressed with the solemn responsibilities of his office: but there never was a time in which he thought himself excusable either in neglecting or lightly performing these and similar services.

His parish, situated on the shores of the Solway, lay within the Border district, and partook, to some extent, of the lawless character still attaching to the scenes of ancient feud and foray; while, to add to the disorder, the last illness of his predecessor had been prolonged for thirteen years, during which his charge had devolved on temporary assistants. The effects of this long disturbance of the parochial economy had been to bring the parish into a state of more than usual laxity in religious habits and moral character. Besides, Mr Duncan found that the physical circumstances of his people were in many cases very distressing. Consecutive scanty harvests at the close of last century had raised the price of provisions so extravagantly, that, even with a very high rate of wages, it was impossible for the working classes to support nature, and famine and fever threatened to accomplish what a merciful God had restrained an armed enemy from effecting in our happy island. So far back as 1796, the dearth had been sufficient to alarm the community, and measures had been taken in Dumfriesshire, as well as elsewhere, to lessen the calamity by voluntary agreement among the landlords and tenants, whereby they sacrificed a portion of their profits on the sale of corn, in order to bring provisions within the reach of the poor. This method, however, was in its very nature temporary, becoming impracticable as soon as the pressure of the

times came to be felt by the wealthier classes; and, by the time of Mr Duncan's settlement, some new expedient was already felt to be necessary. His mind, ever fertile in plans of usefulness, soon suggested a remedy, new and untried before in country parishes, which his active and practical philanthropy led him at once to follow out. Without calculating pecuniary hazards, he ordered, through his brothers in Liverpool, a cargo of Indian corn, which was discharged in due time at the shore of a little creek which runs into the parish from the Solway Frith, and thence conveyed to a store which he had provided for its reception in the village of Ruthwell. This he retailed by means of a respectable and trustworthy agent, at prime cost, to his poor parishioners, in quantities graduated by the size of their respective families—many who had no money to pay for it being supplied on credit. Comparative comfort and plenty soon reigned among the families of Ruthwell, in the midst of surrounding distress; and the spectacle thus presented, gave an impulse to the benevolent energies of good men, fraught with the most extensive and beneficial results, and set an example which, in similar circumstances, has since that period been again and again repeated, not only in Ruthwell, but in other needy districts, to the great relief of the famishing.

It often happens, however, that the efforts of benevolence, instead of meeting with reward, are attended with loss to him who makes them; and so Mr Duncan found in the present as in many future similar instances. His calculations had been more favourable to the cause of benevolence than to his own purse; for, when the transaction was closed and the balance struck, it showed a deficit which he had not expected, and which he

could not very conveniently sustain. That to him, however, was a matter of small concern. His people had been relieved,—much good had been accomplished; and he felt in this that his reward was more than ample. There was one indignity from which good men have often to suffer, which it is believed he escaped:—Slander never, so far as I have heard, imputed to him a selfish motive. His character for benevolence and simplicity of purpose, established at the outset of his life, was never lost, and protected him from imputations which have embittered the minds of many men, perhaps as laborious and self-denied as he, in their pursuit of the true interests of their species.

While thus engaged in the peaceful duties of pastoral care and benevolence, he was also, as leisure permitted, beginning a course of tasteful improvement at the residence which he was destined, for upwards of forty years, to occupy, and which, during that period, he saw year by year, under his plastic hand, becoming more beautiful and attractive.

CHAPTER V.

NATIONAL ALARMS—A SOLDIER DIVINE—GOOD FRIENDS!—RESOLUTIONS.

But other and very different occupations soon claimed Mr Duncan's attention, and engaged his enthusiasm. About the beginning of the century, the political perils of the country seemed to be growing daily more alarming. The extraordinary successes which had attended the French armies under Bonaparte, and the threats which he held out of an invasion of the British shores, had first astonished and then roused our countrymen. Levies were made to recruit the standing army, and every necessary arrangement entered into for putting the nation into a posture of defence. The enthusiasm of the time was propagated to the remotest corners, and nowhere was more remarkable than in the distant parish of Ruthwell. We have seen how, in a very private sphere, he had exerted himself in this cause; and now that he occupied a more prominent and influential position, he was not likely to be backward. Under the assumed names of Senex and Juvenis, alternately used, he kept up, in the only newspaper of the district, a series of letters, in which aged prudence and youthful heroism were

made to mingle their appeals to the patriotic feelings of the public. Whether the alarm now sounded over the length and breadth of the land was exaggerated or not, and whether the Government of the day may not have been glad, for its own purposes, to foster it, there is no doubt that the nation was thoroughly in earnest. All classes felt the sympathy of the time. The Church of Scotland, in all her courts, addressed the people. The nobility and landed proprietors strove to awaken the classes beneath them to a sense of the national danger; and preparations of every kind which love of country could suggest, were made to meet the crisis.

The young minister felt the glow of the prevailing enthusiasm, and addressed his adult male parishioners on the duties of the time, urging them to signalise their patriotism by an offer of their services *en masse* as volunteers in defence of their country. The proposal was adopted, but on one condition—namely, that their minister should be appointed, and should consent to become, their leader. Singular as the terms seemed to be for a member of the clerical profession to accept, he agreed to them with scarce a moment's hesitation. They were ratified by Government, and "the Ruthwell volunteers," with their captain, were immediately embodied, and introduced to the duties and fatigues of military training.

Remembering the popular influence of the muses, he composed for them a spirit-stirring song, which bears date August 1803, a few verses of which are inserted here, rather as an illustration of the spirit with which he entered into these proceedings, than for their poetic merit:

THE RUTHWELL VOLUNTEERS.

Hark! the martial drums resound;
Valiant brothers, welcome all;
Crowd the royal standard round,
'Tis your injured country's call.

He whom dastard fears abash,
He was born to be a slave;
Let him feel the tyrant's lash,
And sink inglorious to the grave.

He who spurns a coward's life,
He whose bosom freedom warms,
Let him share the glorious strife—
We'll take the hero to our arms.

* * * * *

I am prepared to be told that the position into which Mr Duncan was thus brought by his own act, was not one which, as a minister, it became him to have assumed. I admit that it must require considerations of the most imperative necessity to justify the step. Nor would I press its defence farther, than by reminding the Christian reader that he is hardly now in circumstances to judge of the claims of that alarming crisis, when all generous and patriotic men in the land were urged forward to undertake the duties of defence, even at greater hazards than that of being branded as extravagant or enthusiastic. Had the expected invasion taken place, and a foreign soldiery been permitted to devastate our fair fields, and ravage our happy British homes—as was then universally expected—perhaps it would have been more readily allowed, that even the office of a minister was not necessarily desecrated by assuming defensive armour during the season of alarm and peril.

The following quotation will explain the views

with which he engaged in these military proceedings. It is taken from an address to his parishioners, published along with a sermon, about the time; and, though certainly not intended by its author as a defence of the step he had taken, will serve as such in this place, and is, in fact, the only one we feel inclined to offer:—

The first in the county, and among the first in the kingdom who made an offer to Government of voluntary service against the enemies of your country, you have set an example of zeal and alacrity in the public cause, which reflects honour upon the parish to which you belong, and must endear you to all who have at heart the interests of liberty and religion. To convince you that I am desirous of declining no service, however arduous, in which it may be your duty to engage, I have, at your earnest request, accepted of an appointment which will place me foremost in the hour of danger. Upon any other occasion, and under any other circumstances, I should not have thought that appointment compatible with my office as a minister of the gospel of peace; but, convinced as I am, that under Providence our best security consists in the zeal and activity of every individual in the community, I should have been inexcusable had I, by showing any reluctance to share the hardships to which you may be exposed, been the means of damping your ardour or restraining your exertions in the common cause. * * * * Were I desirous of declining this arduous service, there would not be wanting reasons of sufficient weight to justify my conduct to the world. I could plead the sanctity of my character, and the duties of my profession as a minister of the gospel of peace. But I could not stand acquitted to my own heart, nor consider myself worthy of the confidence which you have hitherto reposed in me, were I meanly to shrink from dangers to which you may be exposed, or selfishly to avoid those hardships which the united voice of duty and of interest command you to endure.

Though Mr Duncan was probably the first, he did not long continue singular among the Scottish clergy,

in demonstrating his loyalty and patriotism, by a voluntary military service. Among others who somewhat later acted a similar part, it is well known that Dr Chalmers, then newly inducted to the parish of Kilmany, was one. There can be no doubt, however, that the duties of the new profession which he had for the time adopted, were sadly incongruous with those of a spiritually-minded minister of the gospel. Even a deeply serious and devout mind was likely to suffer loss from the intercourse and pursuits which now became necessary; and much more was this probable in the case of one who as yet had certainly attained to no very clear and heart-affecting views of sin and holiness—of God and grace. Hence we find the young minister, at this period of his life, not unfrequently at Dumfries, joining in the thoughtless amusements of the Assembly-room, where his graceful appearance and attractive manners made his presence always acceptable.

His duties as a soldier, too, were sometimes strangely mingled with those of a sacred character. On one occasion, for example, he had to preach in one of the churches of Dumfries on the morning of a Sabbath immediately succeeding a night which he had spent on guard:

"You reverse the couplet of Hudibras," said the witty Col. De Peyster, who met him in the street at daybreak, hastening to change his uniform for the more sober dress of his clerical profession,

> "'So, like a lobster boil'd, the morn
> From black to red began to turn.'"

It certainly needed all the importance of the defensive service in which he was engaged, to blend without offence their inharmonious hues. And yet, whether

it arose out of the lukewarmness of the age, or the universal sense of the necessities of the times, or his own amiability, and the charity often shown to a generous enthusiasm, even in its excesses, it does not appear that he ever suffered as a minister in the good opinion of the public, or was made, even for a moment, to feel by the remarks of those around him, that in such scenes he was out of his proper place. This is not mentioned as an apology—as such the honoured subject of this memoir would have been the last to mention it—but rather as a trait of this remarkable era, and of his relation to his own times.

About this period a circumstance occurred strikingly illustrative of the character both of minister and people. The name of G—— P——, a youth under age, had been, by an error, inserted on the militia ballot roll for Ruthwell, and drawn for service. Resolved to claim his legal exemption, he procured his baptismal register, and awaited the day when, at the proper court at Annan, his case might obtain a hearing. The young man met with little sympathy, however, from his fellow-parishioners, who knew that his success would cause a vacancy which must be supplied from among themselves. The parish club—comprising all who sought to avoid the risk of personal service by mutually subscribing for substitutes—met on the occasion to consult. The lad's father attended, and produced his son's register to show the goodness of his case, but, at the same time, offered to relieve the parish from the dreaded hazard, by leaving his son's liability unchallenged, on condition that, by payment of double fees, he should obtain the privileges of the club. An offer so advantageous Mr Duncan, who was present, urged the members to accept; but, for once, he was

overruled in his own parish. They cherished the hope that the conscript might lose his case, which would relieve them from all anxiety and expense, and they positively refused to entertain the overture.

The whole population—men, matrons, and maidens—now became earnestly interested in the case. It was Ruthwell *versus* the recruit. The parish gossips talked of nothing else; and the bitter and unfair spirit of a litigious contest too clearly marked the proceedings. The part their minister had taken at the meeting subjected him to suspicion, as leaning to the side of the youth; yet, possibly, he might suggest some plan to aid his people in their dilemma, or, at least, might not refuse to draw up a petition for them to the court. A deputation of the warmest of the parish partisans accordingly waited on him to beg his assistance. Having heard their request, he replied by showing them the impropriety of attempting to tamper with a court bound to act according to the laws, and the certainty of their exposing themselves, by such a proceeding, both to ridicule and censure. This remonstrance was vain. Inflamed with passion, they upbraided their minister as unwilling to sympathise with or assist his people. He replied that they entirely mistook him. His earnest wish was to advise them for their own good; and if they would show him how he could serve them, his greatest pleasure would be to do so.

"What would you have?" said he.

"A petition," was the reply. "Will you prepare one for us?"

"With pleasure," he answered. "Tell me what you wish to petition for, and I will do as you desire."

This reasonable stipulation being acceded to, he

duly prepared a sheet of paper for the purpose, which he headed in the usual form of a petition. He then waited for information as to what should follow.

"This," he said, "is a petition to the Court of Appeal in Annan from certain parishioners of Ruthwell. What do the petitioners pray for?"

The men looked at one another, but gave no answer. At length one of them hinted that the minister knew the case as well as themselves, and could express their wishes better than they could do.

"Must I then say that G—— P——, a youth under age, has been, by an error, drawn in the late ballot, and that, in order to save the risk which must arise to the people of Ruthwell from another ballot, he ought to be obliged to serve?"

No; they acknowledged that would not answer.

"No," he rejoined; "it would *not* answer. Such a petition would be very hopeless, very unjust, and very absurd. Such, however, is the only petition you can —so far as I see—under the circumstances, prepare. It is a simple statement of the case, and—if I am not mistaken—of your wishes. But let me know if you can furnish any thing more to the purpose. I am really desirous to serve you, if I only knew how."

The deputation—silenced but scarce satisfied—returned with the tidings of their fruitless interview. The tale soon assumed the most exaggerated character, and the minister, lately so universally beloved, was now regarded as having leagued himself with a party who were the enemies of his people. The clamour increased as the day of the expected decision approached. It dawned at length—a bright morning in summer. The whole population of Ruthwell seemed to have poured itself upon the road to Annan. As

the minister on his quiet horse moved soberly along, he was grieved to see the look of discontent with which his usual friendly smile was met.

"A warm day this, William," he said, to a tradesman whose zeal he knew had been conspicuous, and whom he recognised in passing.

"It'll be better for you ere night," was the uncourteous reply.

Arrived at the place of meeting, he took his seat near the gentlemen before whom the case was to be argued. When it came on, the youth's baptismal register was produced. A few questions were put to Mr Duncan regarding his young parishioner, to which he gave replies more consistent with truth than with the wishes of his people. A decision was instantly recorded in his favour, and a new ballot ordered for the parish of Ruthwell. The disappointment and rage of the people found vent in the open street, where certain individuals were heard threatening to take signal vengeance on their minister, who had been the means, as they declared, of involving his people in this dilemma, and to such an alarming height had their violence risen, that Mr Duncan was earnestly entreated by his friends, and by the landlord at his inn, not to run the risk of travelling in the twilight along a road still crowded by persons apparently bent on injuring him. He was not the person, however, to be intimidated in a case like this. Fortitude—a quiet passive courage which never flinched or faltered in danger—was one of his most striking characteristics. With calm deliberation he mounted his horse, and set out for home.

"Good night, William," he said, as he passed his friend of the morning.

"A better than ye deserve," was the sullen answer; but no one lifted a hand to hurt him.

Next day, hearing that one of the women of the village, famous both for the violence of her tongue and the prowess of her arm, had been threatening to wreak her vengeance on his person, if he should ever again dare to enter the village, he went straight to the cottage of the virago, and addressing her good-humouredly on the subject, so disarmed her wrath that this very person became from that day a leading champion in his defence. The heat of the occasion indeed soon passed away, and this his first and last feud with his people soon came to be mentioned to his praise, even among those who had taken the most violent part in condemning him.

Till this time we have met with nothing to indicate that the marvellous change expressed by the word *conversion* had yet taken place in his soul, and it is not easy to mark the date when my venerated father first began to see the gospel with a believer's eye. His naturally candid and open mind, indeed, invited truth from every quarter; and it seems to have been this valuable quality of his original constitution which the Spirit of God employed to bring him at length to desire something better than the husks of legalism in religion. As yet his mind was comparatively dark; but an incident occurred in the summer of 1804 which may be looked on as in some measure the turning point of his religious character.

Attending his presbytery one day at Annan, he learned that three of the Society of Friends, who were announced in their simple and peculiar style as Solomon Chapman, Deborah Darby, and Rebecca Byrd, had arrived, and intended to hold a meeting the same

evening. His curiosity was excited, and, notwithstanding some clerical remonstrances, he waited in town to attend it. The pious sincerity of all the speakers deeply affected him. His heart warmed towards them; and, having introduced himself to them at the close, he learned that they were prosecuting a mission to the South of Scotland, to which they seemed to believe themselves divinely called, and that their road next day would lead them through his parish on their way to Dumfries. He invited them accordingly to visit the Manse as they passed, and to rest and dine with him, which they did. His father and mother, and elder sister, then unmarried, now Mrs Phillips, were present, the latter of whom has, at the author's request, given an account of the visit in the following letter:—

"We found them plain simple-hearted Christians bent upon doing good. The two ladies travelled in their own phæton, while their friend attended them on horseback. They had come from Shropshire upon this call, and he had joined them from Sunderland at Carlisle. After dinner, one of the ladies—Mrs Darby—turned in a kind but solemn manner to your father, and addressed him for some minutes in the most friendly and affecting way, saying that she could not leave his hospitable roof without expressing the interest she felt in him, and the assurance she entertained that he would be a blessing to those among whom he lived, and whom he was engaged in teaching the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. She pointed out the responsibility of his situation, and gave many sweet advices and many warnings, all of which you may remember better than I can, by your having heard your dear father tell them. After this address was ended, your father attempted to reply, but was so overcome that he could only say a few words of thanks, and burst into tears. Indeed there was not a dry eye in the room, except those of the composed individual whose words had produced the sensation. After a short and solemn silence, her female companion turned gently to me, and said that she had felt her heart drawn

to all in the company, but particularly to the dear young woman, as she called me, whose duties seemed to be to assist her brother in doing good to all around by advice and example. She pointed out how much a female in my situation might do by lightening burdens, by sharing them, by urging on in the path of duty, and promoting the good of all within our influence. I could make no answer but grateful tears; and in a minute Deborah's large hat was laid on the table, and she and the rest of us were upon our knees, when she said she could not leave this house without imploring a blessing upon it, and thanking God for directing them to it, as she was persuaded it was for good, She then prayed for the parents and for their children present in a most earnest manner. When the phæton was announced, and they took leave, she turned round, and holding up her hand, she said, 'The blessing of the Lord be upon this house.' Their male friend had entered into the spirit of the scene with silent interest; and when your father took his hand to say farewell, and expressed a hope that on some future occasion he would call when business led him that way, he said, 'I do not think I could pass thy door without coming to see thee.' The three set off for Dumfries to hold a meeting; and your father was so drawn towards them that he mounted his horse, and had again the pleasure of hearing and conversing with them. * * * Some years later, I embraced an opportunity of visiting Mrs Darby in Staffordshire, and remember well her expressions of gratitude to God, who had guided her to Ruthwell, as if she felt satisfied that the good thus accomplished was a sufficient reward of her mission."

These three amiable and devout Friends were well known and highly esteemed in their own society, of which they were "approved preachers." Mrs Darby, who was a lady of property, seems to have been strikingly distinguished by her zeal and devotion. In the "Life of Elizabeth Fry," published by her daughters, we learn, that while that philanthropic Christian was yet enchained by the fascinations of the world, she was brought into the company of Mrs Darby, who became instrumental in prompting some of her earliest benevolent aspirations; and that she remarkably pre-

dicted her future zeal on behalf of suffering humanity. It is somewhat singular, that the same person should have found Mr Duncan in similar circumstances, and have foreseen a favourable change in his case also. Did this arise from any peculiar measure of spiritual discernment with which this individual was gifted, or were there already sufficient indications in both cases to lead to the remark? There was a striking resemblance on several points in the two histories. Gaiety and worldly conformity at first distinguished both—ardent philanthropy and persevering charity followed—humble devotion and piety crowned the drooping head of each at last. We cannot fail to be affected by observing the same instrument employed by Providence, in either case, to touch the springs on which the future motions of Christian love and faithfulness depended.

It was always with evident pleasure that he referred to the visit of these Good Friends; and from this time his mind was certainly more solemnly impressed than formerly with the immense importance of divine things. If we are not warranted in saying that he now gave himself to Christ, I think we are led to believe that the Spirit was already striving with him, and beginning to prepare the soil of his heart for that seed which at a later period sprang up and produced its abundant fruits.

A small manuscript remains, neatly fitted to the size of a common pocket-book, and bearing the marks of having been much used, dated 25th August 1804. It affords evidence of the secret working of a conscience susceptible of the best impressions, and tenderly alive to the evil tendencies of his natural heart, and was written, we may gather, while the effect of the

conversation of his Quaker friends was still fresh on his mind. Part of this we subjoin :—

Ruthwell, 25th August 1804.

So far as I am acquainted with my own heart, I have reason to believe that it is open to virtuous and pious impressions ; but I have to lament an imbecility of mind and an indolence of disposition which have too often prevented me from resisting, with that firmness which becomes a Christian, the corruptions of the world, and from adhering with steady principle and unwearied diligence to the path of duty. When I would do good, evil has still been present with me ; and my life has been little else than a continued series of broken resolutions, feeble efforts, and misguided conduct. I have felt at times a pious ardour leading me to disinterested exertions in the cause of religion and virtue ; but when I came to reduce to practice the resolutions which my better judgment had formed, an unworthy fear of "the world's dread laugh," or an exaggerated view of the difficulties I had to encounter, prevented me from performing what I knew to be my duty. The motives suggested in the gospel of Christ ought, I am well convinced, to have sufficient influence upon my mind in inducing me to hold fast my integrity, and to glory in the truth ; but I do not perceive, in fact, that the impressions which they make are so favourable as I could wish. I have not hitherto allowed them to dwell long enough upon my heart, and to enter minutely into the common transactions of life. The path of religion is not always distinctly seen through the false medium of prejudice and passion. There are so many methods of self-deception that the particulars of our duty require to be clearly understood, frequently reflected upon, and deeply impressed upon the mind.

Under the influence of these considerations I have thought it my duty coolly and deliberately to reflect upon the failures of my past conduct, and from a knowledge of the temptations by which I am most liable to be overcome, to lay down rules for my future behaviour, which, by the blessing of God, may be the means of enabling me to walk more worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called.

Gracious God ! without whom all my efforts are vain, do thou grant me strength and grace to perform the resolutions which I now make !

1. The duties I owe to God.

I do solemnly resolve to impress upon my heart the obligations under which I lie to my heavenly father as my Creator, Preserver, and Lawgiver, and in Christ Jesus my never-failing Benefactor and Friend—morning and evening to kneel before him and pour out my soul in gratitude and love—on all occasions to remember that He is present with me, and to bow submissive and resigned to his holy will. * * *

2. The duties I owe to my fellow-creatures.

I do solemnly resolve to consider all mankind as my brethren, and to do to others as I would that they should do to me. * * *

3. The duties which I owe to myself.

I do solemnly resolve to preserve a continual guard upon the appetites and passions of my nature, and to keep myself unspotted from the world. * * *

Each of these heads is expanded in a variety of particular resolutions—comprehending the regular study of the Scriptures—habitual reverence for the Word of God, and devout attendance on religious duties—the setting of a good example to others—the discountenancing of vice—the maintenance of truth, honour, and integrity—the exercise of charity in judgment—of a peaceable disposition in the intercourse of society—of forgiveness towards enemies, and of kindness and benevolence to the poor—regular self-examination and attention to the operations of his own heart, (in reference to which there is added in a parenthesis, "N.B. I will in this respect endeavour to follow the example of the very respectable sect of Christians known by the name of Quakers, whose principles and conduct in many particulars I think worthy of being adopted,")—the suppression of pride and inordinate self-esteem—the mortification of every improper desire and irregular affection, and the resistance of every tendency to indulge too freely in the pleasures of the table.

He resolves to read over these important rules at least once every day till he can repeat them with ease, and then concludes with the following prayer: "Enable me, O God of mercy, to perform my vows for the glory of thy holy name, for the good of mankind, for the salvation of my immortal soul, and for the sake of thy beloved Son. Amen."

Those who have perused the "Cottage Fireside" will here recognise the original draft of those resolutions which the supposed autobiographer in that little work represents himself as having adopted. One or two expressions indicate imperfect views. The word "virtue," for example, applied to human character in the sense evidently intended, savours less of the truth as it is in Jesus than of the pride of our natural self-righteousness, and was afterwards rigidly excluded from his religious vocabulary. The use of this term, he would tell his young clerical relations and friends, ought to be very sparing and guarded, especially in the pulpit, as calculated to mislead the minds of the people. Still, notwithstanding this and other indications of a yet immature understanding of gospel truth, we may perhaps be warranted in regarding the proof it furnishes as sufficient to show the awakening of a heart ready to turn to the Lord, and seek him in sincerity.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS MARRIAGE—THE PARISH BOX—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES—EFFORTS TO ENLIGHTEN.

We commence a new chapter with an event of the highest consequence to Mr Duncan's future life and character. This is no other than his marriage to Agnes, only surviving daughter of his predecessor, the Rev. John Craig, which took place in Nov. 1804. Miss Craig had long been the beloved and active dispenser of kind offices in the parish of Ruthwell. Every family was known to her, and the circumstances of each were to her benevolent and active mind subjects of sincere interest. Trained as she had been to domestic habits, the somewhat gay humour of the young minister was checked and moderated by this connexion; while the natural talent, ever ready wit, shrewd judgment and observation, accurate power of discriminating character, untiring benevolence and large fund of acquired knowledge, all of which peculiarly distinguished his future wife, made him feel in her society that he had found the companion whom he needed, to sympathise with his literary tastes, and to aid him in the pursuit of those home duties to which the pastoral office called him. Mrs Duncan's family connexions and her ancestry were, like her

husband's, in a great measure clerical; and some of her forefathers had been sufferers in the persecutions preceding the Revolution.*

Versed in the legendary lore of these trying times, and nurtured, both by reading and predilection, in the principles for which the fathers of the Church of Scotland had been called to suffer, Mrs Duncan held these principles with enthusiastic devotion, while a piety, deep and serious, though, if possible, too unobtrusive, shed its influence on all she did. If her own child, who was admitted to the closest and most endearing acquaintance with her habits and feelings as a Christian, and who gratefully traces to the best of mothers any serious impressions or good principles he possesses, may bear his testimony, it is to this effect; and he is satisfied the progress in religious acquirement, steadily though but gradually made for many consecutive years by the honoured subject of this memoir, depended greatly, under God, on her hallowed, but unobserved and gentle influence. If much is not heard of her in the narrative which follows, this is only in keeping with the retiring humility of her nature, which shrank from public observation; but it does not arise, certainly, from her having been either inactive or unin-

* Her father had been successively minister of Kirkpatrick-Fleming and Ruthwell; her grandfather of Hoddam; her great-grandfather, first of Beith, in Ayrshire, from which he was *outed* in 1662, and after the Revolution,—of St Quivox. During the persecutions, this faithful minister, the Rev. Alex. Orr, had been often exposed to danger, but might have escaped bodily harm, had he not been detected by a cousin of his own in the act of holding up his child in baptism, at one of the forbidden meetings for worship in the fields. He was informed against by this relation, was seized by the military and thrown into the tolbooth or prison of Edinburgh, where he lay for a considerable time. Wodrow the historian, in a letter to the Rev. James Guthrie, of Irongray, bearing date September 4th, 1710, mentions his death as having just taken place, and as that of one "of the prettiest [most admirable] men" in the presbytery of Ayr.—*Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 168.

terested in the progress of events. Not one step of importance did Mr Duncan ever take without consulting his wife, on whose advice, marked, as it always was, by a cool, dispassionate, and singularly practical judgment, he could with confidence rely when jealous of the ardour of his own feelings. His writings and correspondence were thus generally put to the ordeal of domestic criticism; and frequently some paper for the press, or letter, perhaps too hastily conceived, having been by her objected to, and by him for a time good-humouredly defended, was in the end without remorse consigned to the flames. Their characters were in many points very different, and yet there probably never existed, in any conjugal union, a more entire congeniality. She proved, through the twenty-eight years of their married life, what a Christian wife ought to endeavour to be to her husband,—a help-meet for him. The manse became more than ever *the parish dispensary*—the resort of the widow, the fatherless, and the friendless—where the circumstantial story of real distress, the verbose complaints of imbecile depression, or the appeal of perplexity for advice, were sure to meet with kindly attention from one who, though often tempted to smile at the developments of character thus brought under her eye, never failed to sympathise. By this connexion his interest in the parish became, if possible, more endeared; and, with growing enlightenment, he continued to exert every means for the substantial improvement of his flock.

Since his lot had been fixed at Ruthwell, nothing in his intercourse with the people had more deeply affected him than their poverty, not only as the fruitful source of wretchedness, but as having a tendency to degrade and demoralise. He had very early turned

his attention to this subject, and had adopted the deliberate conclusion, that a system of legalised pauperism, in such a community, would only add incalculably to the corrupting influences of their condition. As the case stood in Ruthwell, indeed, there was not much to be apprehended, in the meantime, from this source. The funds provided for the poor were extremely slender, only adequate to the more urgent necessities of the aged and disabled, and quite inapplicable to the general poverty of the population. These arose entirely from the Sabbath days' collections at church, which were, according to law and practice, placed at the disposal of the minister and elders for distribution; and which, small as they were, amounting at this time to an annual average of L.25, for a population of 1100, were yet found sufficient, along with occasional trifling subsidies from other sources, to supply all the cases of real necessity. This sufficiency arose from the singular modesty of the poor, (a feature then common to them, with those of their class generally throughout Scotland,) which greatly diminished the number and extent of the demands, but which, alas, the progress of modern society has now, much to the regret of all Scotsmen who love their country, tended greatly to obliterate. At the time of which we speak, the poor expected less, while the rich, free from compulsory assessments, were voluntarily ready to do more; and thus a wholesome flow of good offices was perpetually descending from the latter, while a corresponding sentiment of gratitude and attachment arose in the opposite direction, tending to sweeten the intercourse of these two great orders in the commonwealth. It is true, that much hardship was often endured, especially in times of out-

ward pressure, from the inadequacy and uncertainty of their sources of supply; but, after all, it was truly a healthy state of things, in which the humbler classes felt the dignity of comparative independence, and gloried in efforts to keep themselves and their families above the necessity, which was often felt to be disgraceful, of an application to "*the parish box.*"

To cherish this spirit among the labouring classes—to aid them, not by the thankless dole of a begrudged poor-rate, but by keeping alive their self-respect—to cherish habits of industry, economy, and forethought—and to put them, thus, in a way of needing as little foreign aid as possible, by inducing them to depend on their own resources—soon became the great object of his management.

With these views, he had early drawn the minds of his people to the adoption of practical measures for their own advantage. A Friendly Society had existed in the parish since 1796, but had, like many similar institutions elsewhere, been ruined by ignorance and miscalculation. The popularity of the scheme had thus been greatly damaged, and it came to be a matter of no common difficulty to reinspire the confidence which this unhappy result had destroyed.

With incalculable pains he formed, from the most correct statistical information within his reach, tables of health and life suitable to his own parish. These he found to be much less flattering to the wishes of contributors than the former delusive calculations, though on this account they were evidently safer. Thus prepared, he next called a meeting of the inhabitants, explained to them the reasons of the failure of their society, and proposed, on a new constitution framed on these tables, that another attempt

should be made in the same direction. The more intelligent of the people generally responded to this appeal, and the society was reconstituted. With a view to keep up the interest of the members, and to accustom them to act for themselves, the management was committed to a number of office-bearers, elected at an annual meeting, whose duty it was to report their proceedings at the expiration of the term of their office. Thus a periodical revision of their pecuniary circumstances was secured, and any errors in the calculations were promptly remedied. Though the affairs of this society, which soon came to be firmly and permanently established, were not always free from embarrassment, and the impatience of some of the members was found at times difficult to control, its influence on the people was in the highest degree salutary. Few institutions have been so valuable to the working-classes as friendly societies. Besides the substantial relief in cases of accident, disease, and bereavement which they provide, the consciousness that this benefit is derived from their own forethought tends to elevate the character of subscribers, and inspire them with confidence in their own resources. And it is impossible to doubt that a people accustomed, voluntarily, to submit to the moral restraints which, among the labouring classes, are necessary to the success of a friendly society, must have thus acquired qualities greatly superior to those which prevail in communities where the legal provisions for the poor supersede in a great measure the necessity of prudence and self-denial.

Such results were unquestionably, to a certain extent, realised in Ruthwell, and the success which had attended the efforts just described, induced him ere

long to found another society, on the same principles, for the female portion of his flock. Assisted by the willing zeal of Mrs Duncan, whose popularity was unbounded, and whose influence with those of her own sex was fully equal to his own, he saw this new association soon rivalling the older institution, and, along with it, dispensing the most valuable temporal benefits to a wide and growing circle of subscribers. Ere long, indeed, we learn, on Mr Duncan's authority, that no fewer than 300 individuals, out of a population of 1100 souls, had become members of one or other of these societies.

Besides the direct increase of personal and family comfort arising out of these admirable institutions, there is generally another advantage derived from them which, because it is of a subsidiary kind, has perhaps been too little prized—I mean the humanising influence of frequent meetings of friends and neighbours for an object of common interest. The means of co-operation thus afforded were found by the minister of Ruthwell an extremely valuable auxiliary to many of his efforts. To facilitate these useful meetings, therefore, he procured from the Earl of Mansfield a site in the village of Ruthwell, on which he got erected a *Society room*—sufficiently humble, indeed, both in its exterior aspect and in its internal arrangements, but to the parishioners possessing deservedly a peculiar interest. This modest building became the scene of many assemblages called together to consult for their own best interests. It was the storehouse from which again and again in times of scarcity their wants were supplied by the foresight of their vigilant pastor; and it became by turns the Sabbath-school room and the house of prayer —the lecture-hall and the rendezvous of all who from

time to time gathered themselves together for the general interests of the parish or the promotion of religion and godliness—a little sanctuary, in short, consecrated to charity and truth.

As an example of the fruits derived from such meetings, I may here mention the reform thus happily commenced in the funeral usages of the district. These had become in the highest degree inconvenient and censurable. The largeness of the company usually invited, the time consumed, the expensive nature of the entertainments, and other abuses connected with interments, called for a complete and radical change. To effect this, a series of rules was prepared by him, produced at one of the meetings, and there explained, discussed, and cordially adopted. These, accompanied by a written pledge of adherence, were at once signed by those present, and soon obtained the names of all the respectable inhabitants of the parish without exception. By this means the serious expense of these occasions, which had frequently involved poor families in ruin, was at once terminated, much valuable time was spared, and many accompanying evils obviated. Some firmness, indeed, was required to carry through the new system; but a short season of experiment so recommended it not only in Ruthwell but elsewhere throughout the country, that its adoption by degrees became general, and its happy consequences are now felt in many distant parishes.

Unquestionably this result was chiefly to be traced to the power of united operation secured by the facilities which the regular meetings of the friendly societies afforded; and it is here recorded as one example out of many which might be adduced, to illustrate the beneficial tendency of these assemblages, when they

are conducted under enlightened and judicious guidance.

To keep alive the interest in these associations, he did not object to follow some of the plans which seemed likely to arrest the general attention. Thus, by one of the rules, the funeral of every member of the male society was attended by a procession of such members as could conveniently be present. A day, too, was annually appointed on which the societies assembled in their hall, and marched with flags flying and music playing to church to hear sermon, and thence back again to their usual place of meeting for the transaction of business. Once a-year the female society drank tea together, thus giving, it is believed, the first example in Scotland of those social gatherings which, under the name of *soirées*, have since become so common and so popular. By these and similar expedients a certain importance came to be attached to these societies in the minds of the people, which, no doubt, tended to increase their lists of members, and to promote their efficiency.

But he was not satisfied merely to advance the physical comfort of his people. He felt all along the liveliest interest in their moral and mental elevation. In the earlier periods of his ministry he frequently spent hours in the parish school, endeavouring to interest the young in the subjects of their studies. To these efforts the Rev. James Grierson, then a schoolboy, traces some valuable results; for that excellent clergyman informs us that his own first desires to become a minister were awakened by the instructions communicated on these occasions, and that to Mr Duncan's "rhetorical delineations, he owed the first glimpse he caught of the beauties of the English classics."

To lay hold on the intellects of the adult portion of

his people was a matter of greater difficulty. His Sabbath-day sermons, indeed, were addressed both to their minds and consciences; but he felt desirous to awaken their thinking powers by introducing them to subjects of a nature somewhat varied. Astronomy, natural science, and history, were the studies to which with this view he sought to draw their attention; believing that the discipline to which the mind becomes habituated by contemplating subjects such as these, and the expansive and devotional tendency of such studies rightly prosecuted, must exercise the most important influence on the general character. It was no easy task, however, to draw his flock together for the purpose of listening to prelections on subjects so uncongenial with their usual trains of thought. The sluggishness of the rustic mind, its dislike of novelties, and contempt for speculative learning, gave ready currency to the numerous excuses which were urged, not without a fair show of reason, by a people whose occupations were laborious, and generally protracted from earliest dawn till latest evening. To overcome if possible their difficulties, real or alleged, even at the expense of the scruples of some of the best of his people (to which he had not as yet learned to pay great deference), he instituted, in the summer of 1806, Sabbath meetings for conversational lectures on the works of God. In efforts like these he was encouraged by one of his earliest friends, Sir David Brewster, who about that time was an occasional visiter at Ruthwell—whose predilections were even then sufficiently matured, and whose enthusiasm and success in the study of nature had already given promise of the high celebrity to which he has since attained. Still, the result was not very satisfactory. The popular mind was not yet prepared for some of the startling doctrines of science, which, indeed,

to many serious persons among the less educated, carried the aspect of rashness and impiety; and the ignorant remarks and ridiculous conclusions * of some of his auditors, while they excited a smile, sufficiently showed that in this department he was labouring in a great measure in vain. Besides, the day he had chosen was felt by many to be unsuitable, and contributed to increase the prejudice of the people against the whole scheme, and thus to induce him reluctantly to relinquish it.

The establishment of a parish library came next to occupy his attention. The few who had learned to value the efforts he was making for their intellectual improvement, were glad that, when driven from one expedient, he had energy and versatility to attempt another; and, though the subscriptions were few and trifling from any other quarter than the Manse, he succeeded in procuring a small supply of valuable books calculated to excite and gratify a taste for natural science and for history, and to put within the reach of such as chose to read, some of the best specimens of the British classics.

These measures were each in turn pursued with characteristic energy and active zeal, and though his success in them fell far short of his wishes, this must be attributed to any thing rather than the want of enthusiasm on the part of the young minister. He longed, however, to be more extensively useful to his kind; and, adopting a somewhat wider sphere, he soon found scope for larger and more successful efforts.

* One simple man, a near neighbour of his own, having listened attentively to the statement that the earth daily revolves on its axis, loudly protested against this strange and unheard-of doctrine, arguing with vehement confidence that were it so, the good man's cart which stood all night near his door would certainly be once a-day turned upside down.

CHAPTER VII.

SCOTTISH CHEAP REPOSITORY—CORRESPONDENCE WITH MISS E. HAMILTON — DUMFRIES COURIER — BIBLE AND MISSIONARY EFFORTS.

At the close of last chapter I have alluded to a new and more extensive employment of Mr Duncan's talents in the cause of improvement. The first of those measures which had an evident bearing on classes beyond the sphere of his own parish, was the publication of a series of tracts, under the title of the "Scotch Cheap Repository," addressed to the humbler ranks—the idea of which was suggested by an English work of a similar kind, which owed its origin to the Christian philanthropy of Hannah More.

Convinced that the people must be addressed kindly and affectionately, and, at the same time, as reasonable beings, he sought thus to win a way to their minds for many invaluable lessons. His object was to make them feel their own dignity and importance in the scale of society, that they might be induced to fit themselves for occupying the sphere in which God had placed them with credit and usefulness,—not as serfs of the rich and noble—labouring for them when young, and hanging on their charity when broken down by age,—but as freemen, with souls as precious and minds

as strong—with a spirit as noble and capacities as versatile—with patriotism as high, and honourable feelings as sensitive, as could be found among the higher ranks of their countrymen. His first wish was to see a peasantry around him, not only strong-limbed and industrious, but distinguished for religion, intelligence, moral energy, and independence. The measures detailed in last chapter were all directed to this end; and in the plan on which he now fell we see a new step taken, aiming at the extension of the advantages he contemplated beyond his own sphere. To the first effort in this direction he was led, in 1808, by a melancholy and startling occurrence which awakened the attention and excited the horror of all the South of Scotland.

This event was a murder committed in the vicinity of Dumfries, under circumstances of unusual atrocity, by an individual named Maitland Smith, who, till the day of his crime, had enjoyed a fair and honest reputation in the sphere to which he belonged. The murderer had been immediately apprehended, and, on the most indubitable evidence, convicted. The tale of his life was communicated to Mr Duncan by himself in his cell, and, presenting as it did some points of interest, and many valuable lessons of truth and warning, all which were rendered more improving by the penitence apparently sincere, and the faith in a Saviour's dying love ardently but humbly expressed by the miserable criminal, he conceived the idea of commencing the intended publication by a simple history of this unfortunate man, the profits of which were to be applied on behalf of his hapless widow and family.

The sale of this little work was so rapid and extensive as to confirm the general idea he had formed regarding such publications; and he accordingly lost

no time in arranging a plan for the accomplishment of his original purpose. It occurred to him that a great advantage would be gained by obtaining the co-operation of some of the neighbouring clergy, and thus enlisting them heartily in favour of the measure, whereby he hoped that its benefits would be spread with greater ease and success over the district. Five of his clerical friends were induced to join in the scheme, and a beginning was made immediately by the publication of "The Honest Farmer," a tale, by himself, which was followed up in rapid succession by other productions of various merit, composed by the different members of this association, and other friends who agreed to lend their assistance.

The work had not reached more than the sixth number when a happy thought induced him to write the following letter to Miss Hamilton, whose talents as an author had been entirely dedicated to the improve ment of the labouring classes.

To Miss Eliza Hamilton.

Ruthwell, 24th September 1808.

MADAM,—I have lately read your "Cottagers of Glenburnie" with much satisfaction, and think it admirably calculated to promote those habits of cleanliness among the high and low vulgar, which are so essential to health both of mind and body, and which we have of late begun slowly to borrow from our English neighbours. But, as that work is chiefly intended for the benefit of the lower classes, it cannot be expected to produce its full effect till it be published in a much less expensive manner. I observe, indeed, that your original intention was to have given it to the world in the form of cheap tracts, which have been distributed in England. This plan so entirely coincides with the views entertained by the editors of the *Scotch* Cheap Repository, that they feel very desirous it should be still put in execution, at least in so far as the "History of Mrs M'Clarty" is concerned. Should you not be inclined to take this trouble on

yourself, I hope the desire of doing good which has so evidently animated you in all your publications, will induce you to permit our making such selections from the work as may appear consistent with the plan of our publication.

This will be conveyed to you through the medium of Lady Caroline Douglas, who has promised to enforce the request contained in it by means of a common friend.

I have the honour to be, &c.

The proposal thus made, accompanied as it was by the earlier numbers, drew from Miss Hamilton a very polite reply, and led to a close correspondence, which was continued at intervals during the remainder of that excellent lady's life. Though prevented from complying with Mr Duncan's request by arrangements with her bookseller, she readily agreed to render any assistance in her power in carrying on a design which she characterised as "truly laudable," and in due time transmitted a tract, which was printed with the rest, and contributed greatly to bring the work into notice. The series was of a kind hitherto unattempted in Scotland; and, though open in several points to the attacks of legitimate criticism, and perhaps not quite invulnerable even in its theology, it encouraged the benevolent efforts of numerous philanthropic individuals in the same field. It proved one of the harbingers of that series of useful practical works addressed to the popular mind, which have since been issuing in an uninterrupted stream from the British press, and must thus have exercised a great and powerful, though perhaps indirect influence in discouraging vice, rectifying error, and spreading truth. "The Cottage Fireside," by Mr Duncan, afterwards published separately, and still acknowledged as a standard production of its class, was universally allowed to be the most valuable tract of the series. Its chief design was to promote sound views of

education among parents in the humbler walks of life. Many of the incidents, and most of the characters, were drawn from life; and the whole narrative refers to scenes and events having such an air of verisimilitude, and so consonant with the views and feelings of the class for whom it was intended, as to have made it extremely popular, and, it is hoped, proportionally useful. The following tribute is from an incidental foot-note to an article in the "Quarterly Review." Speaking of the Cheap Repository Tracts, the writer thus says:—"One series of these tracts, entitled 'The Cottage Fireside, or Parish Schoolmaster,' was afterwards published separately in a small volume, with Mr Duncan's name, and we observe with satisfaction that the third edition of this pleasing narrative is just announced. In point of genuine humour and pathos we are inclined to think that it fairly merits a place by the side of the 'Cottagers of Glenburnie,' while the knowledge it displays of Scottish manners and character is more correct and more profound."

His correspondence with Miss Hamilton was to Mr Duncan himself in many points extremely pleasing, and led his thoughts to more than one topic of congenial interest. Ever engaged in some valuable contribution to the literature of popular improvement, if we may invent a term, she seems soon to have discovered in Mr Duncan a useful coadjutor and adviser. At her request he examined several of her works in MS., and freely criticised and reviewed them before they were sent to press. Among these may be particularly mentioned her "Religious Exercises," and her "Catechism for the Young." Mr Duncan had at one time conceived the idea of himself publishing a little work bearing a similar title to the latter of these, the

manuscript of which, along with a Genevese Catechism, he sent to Miss Hamilton for perusal; but finding that she was herself already in the field, he abandoned the thought. I cannot deny my readers the satisfaction of perusing part of one of that lady's letters, which is not only interesting in itself, but illustrative of these subjects:—

From Miss Hamilton.

53 George Street, Edinburgh,
January 28, 1809.

"Dear Sir,—Had I not been prevented by a severe attack of rheumatism, which has for the last fortnight exercised my patience, I should before now have expressed to you the truly grateful sense I entertain of the obligation you have laid me under. With what attention have you read—with what candour have you judged my little book! Oh, that the critics by profession were endowed with a portion of your spirit! They would then indeed be benefactors to society, and foster-fathers to literary taste.

"I have availed myself of all your observations, and adopted all your alterations, except in one instance (the only one in which we seem to have viewed the subject in different lights); and, in truth, I am right glad to find that I have not more frequently offended against orthodoxical rules; and it is, in my opinion, saying a great deal for the orthodox, since there certainly never was one more free than I am from any theological prejudices, nor who derived less assistance from theological writers. The Scriptures alone have been my instructor, and from them, without other assistance, I have formed my creed. It is not, however, in the spirit of pride or presumption that I have rejected the means of information, or been withheld from applying for it in the works of controversial writers on divinity. It is from a consciousness of my own weakness that I have declined entering on such subjects; for never have they been by chance thrown in my way without exciting doubts, and conjuring up objections that have rendered me uncomfortable. I am, therefore, a sad ignoramus, and know far less of Arminianism, Arianism, and the rest of the sects among us, than I do

of Abu-Taleb, Shiruyeh, and other heterodox Mohammedans. Thus it is that I am unwillingly led to adopt expressions which, from having been used by writers of whom I know nothing, in support of opinions of which I know as little, convey meanings that I never meant; and I make no doubt that this is one reason why the 'Exercises' do not seem to have been cordially received by many of your brethren in the Church of Scotland. I hope they will now appear less objectionable, and feel more obliged than I can express for the assistance you have given me in making them so. The only suggestion which I have not availed myself of is with regard to the Book of Revelation. After the avowal I have made of my ignorance, you will, I fear, think me very presumptuous, if I own that I entertain on that particular point an opinion which, though peculiar, is so strongly impressed, that I cannot easily relinquish it. It appears to me that the darkness of the Revelations is solely owing to the improper medium through which they have hitherto been viewed. They are writings in cypher, and will be read with ease as soon as we are put in possession of the proper key. I speak with great diffidence; but, confiding in your candour and friendship, I speak without reserve, and freely own my belief that this key will never be discovered, while sought for amid events which concern only the temporal interests of kingdoms or individuals. We despise the Jews for their mean and sordid views respecting the majesty and dominion of the Messiah. But do we not attach the same importance that they did to worldly honours, power, and glory, when we imagine that the political changes, brought about by the restless ambition of a few weak or worthless mortals, have been the subject of Divine revelation? I should sooner believe that St John had been commissioned to declare to the parish of Ruthwell, that in the beginning of the 19th century they should be blessed with such a pastor as Mr Henry Duncan, than that he had been informed by the Holy Spirit of the death of Louis XVI., or the usurpation of Bonaparte. Since, surely, there are in your parish many souls more worthy, in the sight of God, than are, perhaps, to be found in any court in Europe, why should not an event of such importance to them have been communicated, if the prediction of events, which take place in the ordinary course of providence, were at all necessary?

"I must not enter too far into this subject at present. Nor

am I quite clear that I ought to enter into it at all; for though, in forming our opinions, we may have been actuated by the most upright motives, and have had nothing in view but the discovery of truth, yet I well know that, in supporting them, we are apt to slide imperceptibly into another spirit, and to overrate the importance of what we have gained by our own exertions.

"What an example do you give me of a very opposite conduct, in speaking so humbly of your excellent Catechism, which I hope you will yet finish and give to the public! There are so many parents who really know not how to go about instructing their children, that there can hardly be too much written upon the subject; and in this country there is, I imagine, a great want of elementary books. Without being committed to memory, your Catechism might be highly useful, and especially to those who are a little advanced in life. I am greatly obliged by the perusal of the Genevese Catechism, which, as far as I have yet read, I very much like and approve. I shall carefully return both as soon as the 'Exercises' are printed, which Manners and Miller promise me shall be very soon; but booksellers' promises are not, in general, very much to be relied on.

"I ought to be ashamed of sending you such a scrawl; but you must lay all the blame on the rheumatism, which cramps not only my fingers but my thoughts. May better health be yours than has fallen to my lot in life. But I do not repine; it would, indeed, be most ungrateful to do so, surrounded as I am by innumerable comforts. I think this weather is not favourable for hooping-cough; but hope your little boy is now so much recovered as not to suffer from the change of atmosphere. Adieu; and believe me, with unfeigned esteem, dear sir, your obliged and faithful servant,

"ELIZA HAMILTON."

Thus introduced to literary pursuits of a kind very congenial to his tastes, he was not long allowed to remain idle. Dr Brewster, whose scientific attainments have since so deservedly procured for him royal favours, had commenced his huge undertaking, "The Edinburgh Encyclopædia;" and the Rev. Andrew

Thomson, lately translated to Edinburgh, had projected his "Christian Instructor." These eminent men both applied to him for contributions. For the former he prepared the articles "Blair" and "Blacklock,"* which appeared in his valuable work; and to the "Christian Instructor," of which he was one of the original proprietors, he became a frequent contributor.

Stimulated by the favourable reception given to his writings, he now felt impelled to make a bolder attempt, with the view of securing attention to such schemes for the amelioration of society as crowded upon his own mind, and recommended themselves to his deliberate judgment. In 1809, the only newspaper published in Dumfries was the *Weekly Journal*, which had no literary merit, and as an organ of public opinion, possessed neither weight nor authority. The world was then fermenting with the excitement of the Continental war, and even this comparatively remote district, demanded a better medium through which to be informed of the progress of events. Mr Duncan perceived the importance of seizing the advantage thus offered to his philanthropy, for conveying to the district in which his lot was cast, a higher tone both in taste and in feeling, and for impressing a better character on its weekly lessons of politics and morals. With the pecuniary assistance of his brothers in Liverpool, he made arrangements for commencing the publication of the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*—a weekly newspaper, the first number of which was issued on 6th December 1809, and of which, though he never

* Dr Blacklock, whose singular attainments in literature and poetry, notwithstanding his blindness, have astonished all who know his history, was Mr Duncan's grand-uncle.

announced himself as such, he constantly acted as editor during the first seven years of its existence. The politics he advocated were more liberal than the higher classes of society at that period always approved; but he invariably gave his hearty support to all that was valuable in the institutions of the country, to which he was, by principle and feeling, as well as by obvious interest, strongly attached. His leading articles on the progress of events were characterised by great vigour, spirit, and eloquence; and perhaps no method of conveying a correct idea of the earnest feelings of the community during the stirring times preceding the peace of 1815, could be better conceived than a republication in the present day of the series into which these articles arrange themselves. Poetry had always a corner in his newspaper, and native talent was never denied an opportunity of showing itself. Among other contributors to its columns, Mr Thomas Carlyle, author of "Heroes and Hero Worship," &c., appears in some characteristic communications, probably the first in which he came before any portion of the public.

Never scurrilous nor malicious, the *Courier* was at this period uncompromising and vigilant; not shunning, yet never seeking occasions of quarrel with those who acted a part hostile to the interests of morality or truth; and faithfully supporting these interests against all assailants.

But the principal advantage which he had promised himself from this enterprise was the one to which also he was steadily devoted. He saw in it one of the most valuable means of promoting the advancement of society in the career of improvement. Whatever proposal for this end arose in the community, whatever movement towards it took place, whatever struggle

after amelioration was made by any party—the *Courier* was found alive to the subject, and aiding the cause of right. Thus bible societies, at this time pushing themselves into the notice of the Christian world, missionary societies claiming also the favourable regards of the professed followers of Jesus, sabbath schools, now making gradual progress both in town and country parishes, and other schemes which Christian zeal had originated, were heartily supported. The efforts of the Evangelical portion of the national clergy now beginning, under the leadership of Thomson and Chalmers, to assume more importance than formerly, were cheered on and applauded; and the coldness and apathy of former ages were rebuked. The *Courier* was not, perhaps, a religious paper in the modern sense of the word, but it certainly approached to that character more nearly than any of its Scottish contemporaries. Its energy and talent, more perhaps than its principles, led to its singular success.

The editorship of the *Courier*, however, began after some years to be felt by him both oppressive in itself, and difficult to reconcile with the pastoral duties of a parish, situate some miles from the place of publication. He resolved, therefore, to commit this charge to other hands, and with this view to secure the services of an able and well-qualified editor. To Mr Grierson, one of the correspondents whose services he had requested in this search, we find him addressing the following letter:—

To Mr James Grierson, Student in Divinity, Edinburgh.

Ruthwell, 27th June 1816.

Many thanks to you, my dear sir, for your active efforts in my favour. * * * I am certainly very anxious to be relieved from the fatigue and anxiety of a very active part in

conducting the editorship of the *Courier*, not to speak of the interference (which I cannot sometimes avoid) with duties of a more sacred nature. I would, therefore, sacrifice not a little to procure a person well suited to the situation, and would go further in this respect, because I am convinced that there are not many who possess all the requisites I look for. I regard the newspaper as a great moral engine, of such power over the feelings and sentiments of the community that the conductor of it incurs no small responsibility; and I have very deeply to regret that my absence from Dumfries has prevented me from fulfilling my duty in this respect to my own mind. The editor, whoever he may be, must be a man who has the interests of *religion* as well as of civil liberty and morals at heart, and who is judicious enough to know how far he may go without creating disgust where it would be desirable to conciliate. This requires a delicate hand, and if a person of this kind could be procured possessing the splendid talents of ———, it is not a trifle that would part us.

This letter indicates the importance attached to the moral and religious principles of the editor to whom he was about to commit this charge. A few months later an arrangement was entered into with Mr M'Diarmid, the present conductor of the *Courier*, who entered on his editorial duties in the beginning of 1817, and whose talents and zeal have maintained for the paper to this day a very honourable position among contemporary prints.

His interest had been early excited by the spreading influence and harmonising effects of the Bible Society. This cause was one which commended itself to every principle and sentiment of his mind, and with his usual vigour he devoted himself to its advancement. Under the highest auspices that Society had been organised and promoted in the metropolis; and in Dumfries, on 26th February 1810, an auxiliary was formed, of which the Duke of Buccleuch consented to be president, and Lord Dalkeith and Lord Queensberry, vice-presidents.

This provincial movement was the result of Mr Duncan's exertions. All arrangements necessary to render the first a meeting suitable to the importance of the occasion were made at his instance; and he succeeded, by the explanations and information which he diffused, in obtaining an apparently cordial concurrence with the object of the society on the part of some from whom he had hardly ventured to expect any thing but contempt. At this meeting he was chosen secretary, and received a vote of thanks "for his zeal in promoting the formation of the society, and for the handsome offer of a quantity of Bibles at reduced prices, for distribution." Nor was this movement the only symptom which indicated progress in the right direction, and inspired good men with the hope—alas, too sanguine!—that a brighter day for religion and for truth was about to dawn. In the same year, he had the satisfaction of securing for the society the recommendation of the Provincial Synod of Dumfries, which, although sufficiently *moderate* in its general actings, seemed at this time willing to unite with the voice of the great body of British Protestants in giving its formal approval to its principles.

How far the example of nobles and aristocrats might have led to the impulse thus at first communicated, it was no part of the Christian promoters of this cause to inquire; but the ultimate result was not by any means flattering to the sincerity of some of those who embraced the cause at first with a becoming show of zeal. It was not long till, one by one, many of the titled patrons of the scheme became apparently lukewarm and indifferent, and then, as if by necessary consequence, its summer friends of less exalted rank drew off. With a narrowed circle of less questionable associates, he continued firm to the cause he had so

cordially espoused; and, adopting every favourable opportunity, he from time to time took a principal share in establishing similar societies in the towns and villages of Dumfriesshire and Galloway. Thus, among other places, we find him engaged in this work at Bridekirk, in January 1814; at Annan in September following; at Mousewald, March 1815; and at Castle-douglas somewhat later. The meetings of the Dumfries branch, of which he was secretary, seldom took place without his presence and active co-operation. The society of Ruthwell, formed among the first, long maintained an honourable distinction in the regularity and amount of its contributions to this cause. One regulation which he had established there, limited the qualification of members to the trifling sum of two-pence monthly, one object of which was to give to every sincere well-wisher of the cause in the parish, the encouragement of membership, which naturally adds to the interest felt in its promotion and advance-ment. The rule seems to have been salutary, if we may judge by its results. This attachment to the cause of Bible circulation survived all future discou-ragements; and when, in 1826, Dr Andrew Thomson, with unflinching courage, though some alleged with too great fervour, defended the pure Bible against the unfaithful proceedings of the Parent Society, he cor-dially joined in maintaining the same side of the argu-ment, and along with the branches in Dumfries, in his own parish, and in almost every part of Scotland, withdrew regretfully from the British and Foreign and joined the Edinburgh Bible Society, the funda-mental rule of which is pure Bible circulation, without note or comment, and without the Apocrypha.

In 1814 he was chosen president of the Dumfries

Missionary Society, which, however, perhaps in consequence of sectarian jealousies, did not run so prosperous a course as the other. Cordially attached to the cause of missions, he rejoiced when, in 1817, Dr Inglis introduced the subject to the General Assembly, and obtained a committee, from the appointment of which arose the India Mission of the Church of Scotland, a measure which refreshed the spirits of sincere Christians in all corners of the land. Of this enterprise, since so happily confided to Dr Duff, as the Assembly's first messenger to the heathen, he was always a sincere and hearty advocate; and for a long season his parish was conspicuous for the regularity and extent of its contributions out of its deep poverty to its support, when, as yet, this matter was left to be attended to or neglected, almost entirely as the taste and principle of individual ministers might prompt.

In short, every scheme of benevolence, of piety, or of philanthropy, in which he found an opening for exertion or co-operation, was eagerly and heartily advocated by him. No time did he feel to be misspent which was occupied in such measures; no efforts too laborious to accomplish the good end to which they tended.

CHAPTER VIII.

RUTHWELL MANSE AND GLEBE—DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS—SOCIETY AT RUTHWELL.

RUTHWELL MANSE, embowered in trees and beautified with the brightest flowers which nature affords to our northern clime, will be long remembered by a very wide circle of friends and visiters. It was an abode not more associated with the unaffected heartiness of the kindest welcome, than with the aspect of taste and beauty which surrounded it; nor will an apology probably be required for introducing here some brief notices of the residence and domestic life of him who for so many years was its honoured occupant.

The Manse lay in the centre of a glebe of fifty acres, which afforded ample scope for the exercise of skill in agriculture, and of taste in the disposition of plantations, of garden-ground, and shrubbery. The situation had no attractions from nature, and the soil was cold and unproductive. A few trees had been planted by his predecessors, chiefly as hedge-rows; a small garden lay at one side of the house, an inclosure for cattle and farm-produce at the other; and the front-door opened into a court, three sides of which

were inclosed by buildings, the fourth being open towards the public road, which crossed at several hundred yards' distance, and from which the Manse was approached by a narrow avenue, bounded on either side by a clump of Scotch firs.

To convert the back of the house into the front, to open a new avenue, sweeping gracefully through the site of the former garden, past the ivied gable, to the new entrance, now adorned with a tasteful rustic porch, and to change a neighbouring mossy swamp into a small ornamental lake, had been alterations executed immediately after his settlement, which must have given a new character to the spot, and at once indicated its capabilities. The hedge-row trees, meantime, disencumbered of their superfluous underwood, had been made to stand out in independent beauty, or to group tastefully; and a new garden, at a short distance from the house, which afterwards extended to nearly two English acres, now occupied most of the space between it and the church, whose belfry might, for a time, have been seen overtopping the young trees. Plantations had been liberally, but with discriminating taste, disposed over several acres in the neighbourhood of the Manse, while some of the innocent artifices of the landscape gardener were employed to produce the best effects. Here a bridge was thrown over what appeared—but only appeared—to be a stream feeding the little lake; there the retiring foliage of the dark spruce-firs seemed to invite to some distant mystery; and, again, the thick covert of an impenetrable shrubbery formed a well-adapted screen to conceal the unsightly operations of the farm-yard or the hot-bed.

The Manse and its environs had thus gradually

grown into a state of rural beauty, which drew the admiration of all visiters. The glebe, in the meantime, had kept pace with these in improvement. Though originally a sterile soil, it had become the most productive in the neighbourhood. He felt it a duty to show an example here, and with this view had brought into operation the various improvements in the science of agriculture as they were successively published. His little territory, in short, had come to be the model farm of the district. Many were the experiments in draining, in ploughing, in reaping, &c., which, from time to time, were made under his inspection; and so well had he succeeded in fertilising his fields, that among his less active neighbours, whose farms gave token of their indifference, it was sometimes remarked that "surely the special blessing of God rested on the glebe." A blessing, indeed, there surely was; it was granted to the energy, versatility, and perseverance of its possessor.

His experience, so far as he thought it valuable for public information, was carefully recorded and published in the provincial newspapers; and numerous observations on the diseases of corn, the burning of clay for manure, the best times for sowing, the most profitable states of the crops for reaping, &c., and the results of his careful observations and experiments, might have led to the very erroneous idea that he had addicted himself to farming, to the exclusion of his clerical duties. Nothing could be less true. The time he occupied with these affairs was but trifling. The willing hands of a faithful and intelligent servant executed, with such assistance as he needed, the tasks which the previous evening's directions had imposed; and a morning's walk to the field, generally once or twice a

week, was sufficient to keep the agricultural operations moving on with regularity and exactness.

Thus, within the inclosure that limited his little domain, every thing had a flourishing, refreshing, and refined aspect, the result of his ever-active desire to make the most of his opportunities; and when, some years after, he had, with the help of his brothers, built for his mother in her widowhood, in a well-selected spot beside the Manse, a cottage remarkable as a model of its kind, whose trellised windows peeped through clustering woodbine and roses on the well-sheltered and shaded little lawn, the spot, especially in summer, when glorious with the varied hues of flowers and blossoms, might have been selected by a painter as the chosen abode of rural taste and refinement.

Perhaps there is no point in this biography at which we may more appropriately than at present enter a notice of one peculiar feature in the domestic arrangements at Ruthwell. Very early in his life as a minister, he had been solicited to take charge of several youths, over whose education (the scholastic part of which was at first conducted at a neighbouring classical academy connected with the parish school) he had enjoyed much pleasure in watching. To these he was soon induced to add the sons of his brothers in Liverpool; and in order to the better instruction of these pupils under his own eye, it had become requisite to substitute the services of an able tutor for those of the schoolmaster and his usher. Two sons and a daughter constituted his own family; and as they advanced towards the period when their education must be attended to, he found that he had thus been led into circumstances which rendered it practicable to secure for them what he had long considered the most desirable method of instruc-

tion. A very decided objection to public schools, and a just appreciation, on the other hand, of the defects of an education entirely private, had led to his deliberate approval of a method, by which he thought the evils of both systems might be obviated, and every good result realised. The plan thus begun was systematically followed out, and, during a great part of his after-life, his house thus became the home of a succession of youths, whom it was his most earnest wish to conduct, under the influence of precept and example, along with his own children, in paths of enlightened wisdom and piety.

With young persons Mr Duncan was always a special favourite. His faculty of entering into their feelings, and suiting his lessons to their capacities and tastes—his sympathy with their joys and griefs—and the calm, dispassionate justice of his administration, at once conciliated their affections and secured their respect. Not even Dr Arnold could feel a livelier interest in the great principles on which a young man's education ought to be conducted, or offer a more valuable opinion on this all-important subject. Firm discipline and undeviating truth, mingled with a constant kindness, were the means he employed to secure obedience and progress. He habitually acted towards his youthful family on the opinion which the writer once heard him give, when consulted by the Duchess of R——, with reference to the education of her son: "Indulgence," he said, "judiciously bestowed, will not injure a child, while undue severity is one of the worst bars to successful training. Indulge a young man in things not absolutely hurtful as much as your inclination prompts, only be firm and decided and unbending, whenever the laws of God and his own

interest require it; and you will thus establish a sentiment in his mind, of mingled love and reverence, without which education can never be hopefully prosecuted."

Though he entirely committed all the duties of the schoolroom to the tutor, in whom he had unlimited confidence, the general superintendence of the progress of his youthful charge, and the paternal vigilance requisite to prevent those corruptions, which among young persons are constantly threatening to mar the best conceived plan, made the duties connected with this system sometimes both anxious and painful. Still his mild and gentle temper, his calm, unruffled, and dignified bearing, his affectionate but decided manner, made the task to him comparatively easy, and diffused among the young family whom he had thus gathered round him, a sentiment of affectionate confidence, mingled with a wholesome dread of giving offence. The boys were his companions—they sat at his table—they addressed him familiarly as "Uncle Henry"—he was their confidant and their friend; and when business or duty did not engage him, not one on the playground could be more full of interest in their amusements. His talent for construction was often put in requisition for their amusement, and the object aimed at had generally a scientific bearing. A globe was to be formed and hung, to illustrate the earth's motions; or a camera-obscura was to be constructed; or the sun's spots to be shown by the telescope; or the apparatus for some of the simpler experiments in natural science was to be erected, with such materials as could be secured on the moment. In all these matters he was ready and full of expedients; so that, when a difficulty arose in accomplishing any of the constructive

schemes to which the active genius of the playground so often gives birth, an application to "Uncle Henry" was an unfailing resource. To the study of astronomy, geology, and natural science, he was always partial; history, too, formed a considerable part of his private reading; and it was ever refreshing to him to find any of his young friends manifesting a love for these pursuits. Nothing was more delightful to the more intelligent boys than a conversation with "Uncle Henry" on such themes as these; and whether, at night, under a clear starlit sky, he was pointing out to them the various constellations by their names, or directing their attention, at the busy hour of noon, to the diligent labours going forward in the glass bee-hive which he had got constructed for his own amusement and for theirs; or affording them by turns a telescopic view of the rings of Saturn, the moons of Jupiter, or the lunar caverns; or whether, around the fireside, he engaged them in some historical discussion, in which he reserved to himself the opportunity of useful remark or instructive anecdote; or whether—for this was not considered beneath his dignity—he lent his aid in arranging their plays, adjusting the apparatus of some miniature theatre, or preparing for the flight of some laboriously constructed balloon or kite—no hours were so happy as those spent by them in his company.

For their use and improvement it was, that at one time he wrote a little poetical piece, entitled "English Story in a Nutshell," intended to convey, in as many verses as there have been reigns or remarkable epochs in that history, a brief sketch of the more striking incidents, as an aid to memory. For their amusement also, and to illustrate some speculations on etymology, he prepared "Hints for the Formation

of a New Language on Philosophical Principles," in which he tried to show how, by the use of the various letters and sounds common to all nations, words might be formed, conveying the same meaning to all; and thus framing, not only a *new*, but a *universal* language. The possibility of preparing such a medium of communication among the various tribes of men, if not thus demonstrated, was at least made a matter of inquiry among the boys; and in their anxiety to try the truth of the theory, many words were compiled, and the various inflexions of nouns and verbs were ingeniously provided for, out of the materials furnished by his new and significant alphabet. These pieces, though never published, were printed by him for the use of his young friends, along with a very ingenious "Astronomical Poem, pointing out the relative position of the chief constellations," written, it is believed, by the Rev. Mr Boag of Paisley. Thus his leisure hours were generally spent in mingling for them the useful with the sweet, and spreading among them the spirit of an enlightened and refined taste. He was not their scholastic teacher, but whatever a father could have been to them he was; and, indeed, it was a common remark among the youths at Ruthwell, more immediately contemporary with his sons, that none could have told by the treatment of the boys, which of the group around him were his own, and which the children of strangers.

His tutors, generally, were aspirants to the clerical office, and in several cases were promoted to livings after having remained in this position for a few years. One of these, however, was an exception, and his name needs only to be mentioned to awaken sentiments of lively regret in the minds of many who knew him

then, or who afterwards became acquainted with him in that wider sphere from which he was removed by death. I allude to Mr Robert Mitchell, who became one of the earliest teachers of the New Academy in Edinburgh, and was likely to have risen to honours in the literary world, had his life been spared. This amiable man spent seven years under the roof of Ruthwell Manse, faithfully performing the duties of his charge, and laboriously preparing himself for after advancement in a profession which was then even less adequately rewarded than at present.

The hours of morning and evening worship were always employed so as to be profitable, and were so arranged as to engage the attention and interest of the young. Besides Scripture, there was generally read a passage from some interesting work, illustrative of the Bible, or of the character and works of God, and the attention was kept up by questions and remarks. By the regular droppings of this dew-like instruction, the youthful mind became insensibly imbued with a variety of information in doctrine, history, and natural science; and the blessed effect of these instructions, I believe, many of those who enjoyed them will cheerfully acknowledge as long as they live. Sabbath, too, was a most valuable season at Ruthwell for the young. It was certainly no day of idleness. Besides the necessary tasks in the Catechism, Scripture history, and texts, they were occupied, in hours not dedicated to worship, in preparing written accounts of the sermons they had heard; and though a quiet walk within the inclosure that surrounded the Manse was not forbidden, it would have been deemed an unwarrantable desecration of the day to spend any portion of it in the usual recreations, and if possible, still more so in idleness or folly.

Many powerfully influential impressions were the result, and not a few have blessed God that they obtained at Ruthwell so palpable a demonstration of the divine wisdom in the appointment of the day of rest.

The society of Ruthwell Manse was varied, consisting not only of the relatives whom he loved to greet with all the warmth and endearment of the liveliest affection, or the Christian and literary friends with whom it was delightful to pass hours or days in happy converse, but also of passing travellers, who sought to view the antiquarian or geological curiosities of which we have yet to speak. It would be unjust to the character and memory of that happy home, to omit the mention of friendless outcasts, who had seen better days, and these belonging to various grades of society, who found there an asylum for months, and only departed when means of comfort and independence had been elsewhere provided. Among the guests, some eminent names in religion, literature, and science, may be mentioned. Sir David Brewster, and James Grahame the Sabbath bard, one of his most valued friends, had very early been his guests. Dr Chalmers was a somewhat later, and not unfrequent visiter. Dr Andrew Thomson once and again brought his joyous greeting to the Manse door; and Dr Welsh, in early life, used now and then to come among us. The eccentric Robert Owen, before his infidelity was flagrant, and when known only as an amiable enthusiast in the walks of philanthropy; Dr Spurzheim, then attracting general notice as the ardent advocate of the new science of Phrenology; Mr Carlyle, since so remarkable among authors; Robert M'Cheyne, both in his interesting boyhood and fervent maturity; Dr Buckland and Mr Sedgwick, of geological fame; with many others whose con-

verse fanned the flames of intellect, or feeling, or Christian benevolence, found their way to the remote parish and Manse of Ruthwell. Beyond these limits, society was thus little needed, and probably has seldom been any where found more delightful, or more profitable to the head and heart, than it was there. One who possesses a mind really active, finds generally time for the pleasures of friendship, which a sloven and idler cannot command; and so it was with Mr Duncan. Engrossing as his occupations were, he seldom lacked leisure for the entertainment of his friends, and few indeed, whose lot has been cast in a retired spot like that of Ruthwell, have been more fortunate in attaching the affection and good-will of so many of the best class of their fellow-men.

In every one of the subjects with which this chapter has been occupied, those readers who knew her best may have looked for the name of Mrs Duncan, or "Aunt Henry;" but that name was never meant to be mentioned for public admiration. Such readers can remember her hearty hospitality, her ever-ready sympathy, her apt wit, her self-forgetting habits, and the lovely halo of Christian kindness that surrounded all she said or did,—but will not wonder that her son should decline to offend, by a more frequent or prominent introduction of her name than he can help, against the humility and unobtrusive modesty of that gentle spirit which shone with so bright and chastened a lustre in her own sphere, but would fain have hid her radiance from all beyond it.

CHAPTER IX.

PROJECTS THE SCHEME OF SAVINGS BANKS—RUTHWELL PARISH BANK—PERSONAL EFFORTS—SPREAD OF THE MEASURE.

WE must now enter on the period when Mr Duncan's efforts for the good of his fellow-men were to expand into a wider sphere, and become the means of establishing one of the most valuable accessories to the economical improvement of the labouring population —I mean the system of Savings Banks—of which he had the honour of being the founder.

It was in the beginning of the year 1810 that his thoughts on the subject first took a practical shape. Particular circumstances connected with the state of the poor of Dumfries and its neighbourhood, and especially a desire to avert the introduction of poor-rates which then seemed to be impending, induced him to publish several letters on the subject in the *Dumfries Courier*, which had already begun to acquire a felt influence in the district. Whilst engaged in the necessary investigations, he had an opportunity of consulting some books and pamphlets lent to him by Mr Erskine, afterwards Earl of Mar, among which he found an ingenious paper giving an account of a scheme proposed by John Bone, Esq. of London, for

gradually abolishing poor-rates in England, called by its inventor "Tranquillity," of a nature, however, too complicated for general adoption. On perusing this little work, he observed a subordinate provision which struck him as worthy of attention. This was the proposed erection of an economical bank for the savings of the industrious—a part of the scheme which, if properly digested, and brought into operation divested of other subjects of a more doubtful kind, he believed might be attended with the most important results to the labouring classes. The ideas thus suggested, harmonised with all his previous conclusions. He saw here in prospect a means of improvement and amelioration dependent on no begrudged and degrading poor-law subsidies—not even on the Christian charities of the rich and benevolent—but on the prudent forethought and economy of the people themselves. Nothing could be more congenial with his earliest and most matured principles. He resolved, therefore, that if possible, the scheme should have a fair trial, and cherishing from the first the hope that extensive and wide spread benefits might be secured for these classes by its success, he set about arranging his thoughts and forming his plans, so as to render the measure he contemplated suitable not for one locality only, but for his country and the world.

No sooner were these ideas matured in his own mind, than he published a paper, as a sequel to the discussion respecting a provision for the poor, in which he proposed to the gentlemen of the county the establishment of *Banks for Savings* in the different parishes of the district. This paper contained a sketch of rules and regulations which were to form the groundwork of the future institution. But being sensible of the

difficulty of inducing any large body of men to engage in an untried scheme, however plausible in theory, he did not confine himself to a mere recommendation in the newspapers. He took immediate measures for giving an experimental proof of its practicability and usefulness, by the establishment of a bank, on this plan, in his own parish. This resolution, he has stated, was adopted more from the conviction that it was the best means in his power of ultimately introducing the system to general notice, than from very sanguine views of benefit to his own parishioners. In point of local circumstances, indeed, there are perhaps few parishes in Scotland, where the scheme might not have been tried to greater advantage than in the parish of Ruthwell; and there were discouragements of a peculiar kind, which it may not be improper to state, that the success of the experiment may appear in its true light. One of these arose from the want of resident heritors (proprietors of land), who might countenance the undertaking with their approbation, and support it with their purse and influence. But there was a still more formidable difficulty to surmount. Notwithstanding by far the greater part of the inhabitants were poor villagers or cottagers, without manufactures, or any other means of subsistence than such as are usually to be found in a remote country parish, there was, as we have seen, a great majority of the adults already connected with friendly societies within the bounds of the parish. He well knew that by far the greater part of these individuals were obliged to strain every nerve for a bare subsistence, and found at times extreme difficulty in fulfilling their engagements to the established societies; but this objection was not such as to deter him from making a trial of the projected

scheme. He knew from experience, that he had to deal with a sober, industrious, and well-informed population, and on this single favourable circumstance he founded the conviction, that his attempt would not prove altogether abortive. He was aware that in almost every family, even the poorest, there are *odds and ends* of income which are too apt to be frittered away in thoughtless extravagance, sometimes in intemperance. Could he but induce the mass of the people to comprehend the value of the savings which might by a reasonable economy be gathered from this source, and could he supply the means of investing these securely, affording them, at the same time, the prospect of a fair rate of interest, not from charity, but from the resources of trade, he was confident the hopes he cherished would be realised. He was not disappointed. The scheme was drawn up and put in execution in May 1810, with the advice and co-operation of some of the most respectable inhabitants of the parish; and in the four following years, the funds of the institution rose by successive steps to £151, £176, £241, and £922!

Always keeping in view the benefit which might accrue from the general adoption of the system, he took every precaution that circumstances would admit of, for increasing the respectability and importance of the Ruthwell Parish Bank, and presenting it to the favourable consideration of the public. With this design, the lord-lieutenant, the vice-lieutenant, and sheriff of the county, together with the members of Parliament for the county and for the district burghs, had been constituted *ex officiis* honorary members. For these and other important reasons, such a form of constitution was adopted as might bring the scheme

within the meaning of the Friendly Societies Act, and not only bestow on it the privileges conferred on these institutions by law, but also allow of its being publicly recognised by the quarter-sessions as an establishment worthy of support. Care was also taken from time to time to announce its progress in the public papers; and, with a similar intention, copies of the regulations were sent to various parts of Scotland, and a correspondence carried on with some public spirited individuals.

Just at the time when the experiment might be considered as completely successful, the subject, thus brought under the public eye, began to attract attention in quarters where this was most to be desired. In 1813, "the Edinburgh Society for the Suppression of Beggars" conceived the idea of adding a Savings Bank to their other projects for the good of the labouring poor; and one of the heritors of Ruthwell, J. Farquhar Gordon, Esq., of Locharwoods, W.S., whose connexion with the parish made him cognisant of the growing prosperity of the parent institution, procured from Mr Duncan, and communicated to that society, of which he was a member, a copy of the Ruthwell Regulations. The opening of the Metropolitan Savings Bank took place in January 1814. Though, from defects in its constitution—for it possessed an eleemosynary rather than an independent character—the progress of this institution was at first slow and discouraging, the example could not fail to have a favourable influence and to attract public attention to the subject.

Ere the existence of the Edinburgh bank had become generally known, however, or the effect of this new influence had time to be felt, the system had recom-

mended itself in other quarters. The minister of Kelso, Mr Duncan's early and intimate friend, with characteristic zeal for the welfare of society, had anxiously watched the progress of the institution from its first commencement in Ruthwell, obtaining from him regular information on the subject; and it soon became his earnest desire to afford to his parish the benefit of a similar establishment. He accordingly invited Mr Duncan, early in 1814, to visit Kelso, and aid him in the accomplishment of his design. Again and again during the course of that summer did he resolve and promise to accede to this wish, but was as often disappointed. The pressure of his numerous and growing avocations perpetually interfered—sometimes at the very moment when he was setting out; and it was not till some months later that the intention was accomplished.

It may illustrate the activity of the life now led by Mr Duncan, to insert here a letter written just previous to this visit, in reply to one from Mr Lundie, indicating some degree of offence in consequence of repeated disappointments.

To the Rev. Robert Lundie.

Dumfries, Monday, 17th Oct. 1814.

My very dear Friend,—My last was written, as this is, in the hurry and bustle of the printing-office, during a short intermission from my editorial labours. I was harassed with business—the rain was pouring in torrents, and it appeared to me that the weather was in good earnest broken for the remainder of the season. I had the weight of a *hundred* labours before my eyes. I was harassed with engagements, which rose in long perspective through "the vista of futurity," and to which I could see no termination. Under these circumstances I wrote the letter, of the unkindness of which you complain, and the

disingenuousness of which you seem more than half to suspect. You never were more mistaken in your life, and know nothing about the matter. However, I have now nearly got quit of the most pressing of my *many entanglements*. My new tutor is come home, and is likely to give great satisfaction. The printing business is in its usual train, and may be left for a few days to go on by the force of the impulse it has received. My domestic affairs stand in no *particular* need of my presence. My clerical duties may be supplied by the good offices of my neighbours; and a meeting of the parish-bank and bible association, which takes place on Saturday, will free my shoulders from the burden of their interests for a short time. I preach at Annan on Sunday before the Bible Society of that place. I propose to sleep at General Dirom's, in that neighbourhood, on Sunday night; and on Monday, wind and weather serving, I will set my sails for Kelso, freighted with all the information relative to our much-valued friend Grahame [the Sabbath bard, a sketch of whose life Mr Lundie was then preparing for the press], which I can procure.

Such, my dear Lundie, is my present resolution. How far I shall be able to keep up to it, I dare not promise.

The purpose indicated in this letter was favourably accomplished in the end of October; and in passing through Hawick on this occasion, he was gratified with an unexpected proof that the example he had set in Ruthwell was beginning to exercise a wide and beneficial influence. Entering the shop of a bookseller, he found, to his surprise and pleasure, copies, damp from the press, of the Ruthwell Rules, and of a detailed account of that institution, which he had himself published in the *Dumfries Courier* some months before. On inquiry, he ascertained that these had just been printed by order of the gentlemen of Selkirkshire in their county meeting, with a view to recommend the establishment of similar institutions throughout their district. The scheme, besides, had already found favourers in Hawick; and before resuming his journey,

he was induced to promise that he would arrange his proceedings, on returning homewards, so as to be present at a meeting, on a day then fixed, to aid them in the establishment of a bank in that town. At Kelso he addressed an assemblage of the most respectable inhabitants of the district, presided over by the venerable Duke of Roxburghe, on the 3d of November, which resulted in the institution of the Kelso Savings Bank Friendly Society.

The steps taken on this occasion were attended with the most flattering success. A degree of zeal and energy pervaded the efforts of the numerous and ardent promoters of the measure; and the event, reported widely by the newspapers of the day, was considered by Mr Duncan himself as one of those favourable circumstances which introduced the scheme to that general notice which it was destined immediately to receive.

During his stay at Kelso, the more public-spirited inhabitants of Hawick had not been idle. They had put the Ruthwell Regulations and accompanying extract, of which they had obtained copies from the printer, into extensive circulation. The report of the Kelso meeting, and the subsequent proceedings, had contributed to awaken the public interest; and, as the first-fruits of these measures, he had the satisfaction, on his return, to be present at the erection of a Parish Bank in Hawick, which has since proved of the highest benefit to that manufacturing community.

From this time banks for savings began to be rapidly established on all sides; and before the end of the year, a very general interest was excited in favour of the system in every part of Scotland. This interest was greatly increased soon after by the publication of an

Essay by Mr Duncan, "On the Nature and Advantages of Parish Banks; together with a corrected Copy of the Rules and Regulations of the Parent Institution in Ruthwell," which appeared in January 1815; and of "The Second Report of the Edinburgh Society for the Suppression of Beggars," which was soon afterwards followed by a statement of the advantages of banks for savings, proceeding from the high authority of the Highland Society of Scotland. By these productions, the advantages of the institution came to be universally known and duly appreciated; so that the Edinburgh Society, in their Third Report, published in the following year, were justified in asserting that it had "made more rapid progress, and had been more extensively adopted, in the course of a single year, than any similar measure ever attempted for the comfort of the poor."

Whilst the system was flourishing so remarkably in Scotland, several attempts were not unsuccessfully made to promote a similar object in the sister kingdoms of England and Ireland. To Dr Haygarth, of Bath, the credit was due, of establishing a scheme of this kind, on an extensive scale in his own locality, which was recommended and fostered from the first by several philanthropists of the highest standing. Among others by Mr Rose, to whom the country had already been indebted for the judicious provisions of the Friendly Societies Act.

Similar establishments were also soon formed at Liverpool, Manchester, Exeter, Winchester, Southampton, Bristol, Carlisle, &c. With regard to Ireland, Mr Duncan used means to make the principles of the institution early known in Belfast, as well as in other places of that country to which he had access; and

having continued to correspond on the subject with a friend who resided in that town, he had, in 1816, the satisfaction of hearing that a bank for savings was established there, forming a most propitious commencement of the scheme in that island. In Dublin, too, a meeting had already been held of some of the highest and most respectable characters in Ireland, who appointed a committee, for the purpose of considering the most effectual method of communicating the benefits of the scheme to every district of the country—a measure which promised the most favourable results.

As may be supposed, Mr Duncan's correspondence on this engrossing subject became at once very extensive and various. Letters of inquiry or information arrived by every post. Almost every county in Scotland furnished a few clergymen who sought his advice in commending the Ruthwell scheme to their parishioners. Philanthropists among the nobility, the gentry, and the legal and medical professions, showed in the same way their interest in the new measure. Ere long, letters began to pour in from the southern part of the island and from Ireland on the same subject; and among other correspondents, he soon found some of the most eminently benevolent persons of his age. Happily for himself and his cause, his readiness as a letter-writer was one of his most remarkable characteristics. Whole days, indeed, were frequently consumed in this laborious occupation; but the amount of work accomplished, while thus engaged, was indeed astonishing. This may be understood, when it is remembered that, among his correspondents on a scheme so entirely new, there must have been, as there were, many desirous of minute information and special explanations—many suggesting difficulties and demanding

their solution—many persevering and insatiable letter-writers, making small allowance for the overburdened and weary individual, on whom had thus at once devolved the care of a thousand infant institutions. Add to this, that the soundness of some of the principles on which he was most decided, was disputed by a few of the warmest friends of the measure, and that he had to maintain on these topics a tedious controversy, not the less necessary, because those with whom it was carried on were among his best friends and coadjutors. Had not the subjects of these differences long since fallen out of date, they might have served here amply to illustrate the broad and liberal views which he was disposed to take with reference to the humbler classes—the generous spirit in which he always contemplated them, and the ruling desire he felt to aid them, in rising by their own intelligence to a higher grade in the social scale. He found many among his most actively benevolent associates, who could not take higher views of the new scheme than they would of a well conceived eleemosynary institute, and who refused to sympathise with his wish to bring the depositors to feel and act upon their independence.

It was to relieve himself from some of the overpowering labours to which he was thus subjected, and to give his general views as wide a circulation as possible, that early in 1815 he published the Essay, of which we have already spoken—of which, in March 1816, a new and enlarged edition was called for.

In a letter conveying a copy of this publication to a friend, he says—

I would have sent you the MS. before printing; but that was impossible, as I began to print the moment I began to write, and have been urged on to the close, almost beyond my

speed. I fear you will observe great marks of haste. Indeed it could not be otherwise, considering the disadvantages under which I wrote; but if the principle be correct, other things are of less consequence. I fear I may be accused of egotism. It is extremely difficult to speak of one's own operations without falling into this error; because what it might be extremely proper for one person to say of another, the world will not allow a person to say of himself. There is, however, surely something false in this sentiment; and for a man to shrink from doing justice to himself, which he would not hesitate to do for his friend, is more like affectation than humility. The Romans, in the classic ages, felt no such delicacy; and the most eloquent writer of them all, whose moral sentiments were not inferior to those of any of his contemporaries, gives us a specimen of egotism, which, in the present day, we hold ridiculous. Is it an attempt to ape Christian humility that has introduced this modern affectation?

This apology, whatever weight it might have deserved, if one had been necessary, no reader of the Essay will deem to have been called for. It contained, indeed, a narrative of facts sufficiently illustrative of his own efforts, which could not, with any propriety, have been omitted; but it arrogated nothing. Its object was a practical one, and it was amply served, by the reception which the publication met with among the friends of the rising institution which had called it forth.

CHAPTE X.

MR DUNCAN'S CLAIM AS FOUNDER OF SAVINGS BANKS — CONTROVERSY ON THE SUBJECT.

A REVIEW of the preceding narrative will show at once to the candid reader, what share Mr Duncan had in the first establishment of this important public measure, and will demonstrate his claim to the title of its *founder*. It is not asserted that he was the first to suggest it as possible for a labourer, or mechanic, or servant, under the ordinary circumstances of that class in this country, to make an important saving out of his or her weekly earnings—and as right in the richer classes to encourage this economy. Societies, it is well known, consisting of wealthy and benevolent individuals, had in some instances been formed in different parts of England—as at Tottenham, under Priscilla Wakefield, at Wendover, and Bath—to encourage the savings of the poor, by rewards, or an extraordinary rate of interest, furnished by the kind charity of the subscribers; and in the parish of Westcalder in Scotland, a scheme having many of the features of the modern Savings Bank had existed, unknown indeed to Mr Duncan, since 1807. These, however, one and all, were either merely eleemosynary institutions sup-

ported by the benevolence of the rich, and therefore destitute of the self-sustaining principle which is necessary to render any measure permanent, or at least were merely local and private associations, confined within their several limited districts, and neither intended by their founders, nor calculated by their provisions, to be generally propagated.

The claim which we put forth for Mr Duncan to this title, refers to the system in its *national and public* character, and it rests—1st, *On the independent self-supporting and self-propagating nature of his Measure*, by which it stands contrasted with all schemes of charity, and takes ground as an economic institute based on the great principles that regulate commercial relations; 2d, *On its adaptation to the wants of the labouring population not in one locality but generally*—and on his avowed design from the first to prove its efficiency in Ruthwell, where there were many local discouragements—chiefly with a view to its ultimate adoption in other places, especially the larger towns and villages; and, 3dly, *On his unwearied efforts both in purse and person*, many of which have yet to be noticed, whereby he recommended it to public favour and secured its success.

This was no scheme of charity. He abhorred the dependent spirit which any general plan contingent on the benevolence of the rich must have engendered; and he knew human nature too well, to believe that such a system would be valued by a high-spirited people, even if its continuance could be expected. He rejoiced in the measure as calculated to inspire the labouring classes with a confidence in themselves, and hoped, by means of their industry and forethought, thus, ere long, to secure them to a great

extent, even in old age, from requiring the begrudged and degrading bounty of a pauper's fund. The great system of Savings Banks, which has since spread over Europe and the world, originating from such views as these, found its first development at Ruthwell in 1810, was partially exemplified at Edinburgh, and was fostered into light and motion at Kelso and Hawick, in 1814, and thence grew with a rapidity that amazed the world. To withhold from Mr Duncan the merit of originating this movement, would be no less unjust and ungenerous, than to deny to Watt or Arkwright their high claims as mechanical inventors, or to Galileo and Newton their still loftier titles as the fathers of modern science.

In the course of the efforts above detailed, however, he was called to enter the lists in a controversy in which this very point was directly involved. The *Quarterly Review* in 1817, in an article on the Rise and Progress of these new institutions, had used the following language:—"We are warranted on the whole to conclude, that, though some institutions, similar both in principles and details, had been formed before the Parish Bank of Ruthwell, yet it was the first of the kind which was regularly and minutely organised and brought before the public; and farther, that as that society gave the impulse which is fast spreading through the kingdom, it is in all fairness entitled to the appellation of the *Parent Society*. If we spoke of the *original* society, we should, from our present knowledge, be disposed to confer that name on the Charitable Bank at Tottenham (Priscilla Wakefield's)."

Besides this measured testimony to the paternity of the system as residing in the Ruthwell Bank, Mr

Duncan in his Essay had applied to it the title of "the Parent Institution." These expressions were resented by some of the promoters of the Edinburgh bank, who, as soon as the measure began to acquire importance, seem to have at once assumed that to them the whole merit of having originated it belonged. John H. Forbes, Esq. advocate, (since raised to the Bench as Lord Medwyn,) one of the most active and benevolent of these gentlemen, accordingly expressed his dissatisfaction with the claim asserted in favour of Ruthwell, in a pamphlet published in 1817, entitled *Observations on Banks for Savings*, and also in a letter to the Editor of the *Quarterly Review*, in which he met with a "*flat contradiction*" a statement made by Mr Duncan in his Essay, that a copy of the regulations of the Ruthwell institution had been communicated to the gentlemen in Edinburgh in 1813, when they were contemplating the erection of a Savings Bank in the metropolis; and among other things was at pains to demonstrate two propositions — 1st, That the plan on which the Edinburgh bank was founded was superior to that of Ruthwell, especially in this, that it did not admit of the popular element in any part of its management or constitution; and, 2dly, That the title of *Parent* assumed in the *Quarterly* and in Mr Duncan's Essay, for the Ruthwell bank, ought more properly to belong to that of Edinburgh.

On the appearance of these productions, Mr Duncan felt that he was bound to issue a reply. The "*flat contradiction*" with which a statement of his had been met, could not easily be passed by unnoticed. Besides, the two propositions above stated called imperatively for remark. The former, maintained with ability by a gentleman whose benevolent character, as well as his

station, gave to his opinions considerable weight, appeared to him so entirely subversive of some of the most valuable characteristics of Savings Banks, as originally conceived by himself and exemplified at Ruthwell, that he foresaw the most disastrous consequences likely to ensue from their general adoption. The latter, which was much more of a personal matter, he might, and, arguing from his natural modesty, we may say he would, have let alone, had it not seemed to involve a charge against himself of presumption, and even of disingenuousness. Moreover, he found himself urged to reply to these statements by the opinion of some of his most valued friends; among others, the Rev. Andrew Thomson, the Rev. Robert Lundie, and Principal Baird, who, though himself a director of the Edinburgh Institution, maintained that justice and honesty required in this case a vindication.

A published "Letter to John H. Forbes, Esq." which was thus called forth from him, accordingly, took up these points, and very convincingly demonstrated the erroneous and unfounded nature of the statements which had been circulated by that gentleman. His reply to the personal attack made upon himself, which occupied the latter half of the letter, is given in the appendix. I content myself here with introducing a short sketch of its contents.

He shewed by a reference to dates that the Ruthwell Bank preceded that of Edinburgh by more than three years and a half; that from the time of its institution he had devoted himself to its future extension, bringing the features of the measure, and the bank itself, before the public, by the press and correspondence. He reasserted the fact so peremptorily contradicted by Mr Forbes, with reference to the transmission of the

Ruthwell Rules to Edinburgh, and was happily enabled, before going to press, to confirm this by inserting an ingenuous retractation by that gentleman of the statement formerly made by him, and an acknowledgement that, to his own great surprise, he had discovered the Ruthwell Rules among his own papers. He pointed to the languishing condition of the Edinburgh institution, during the early stage of its existence, proved by the fact, that up to the publication of the "Second Report of the Society for the Suppression of Beggars," in December 1814, a month after the erection of the Kelso institution, the existence of the Edinburgh Bank seems to have been scarcely known to the public, only one hundred and six individuals having become depositors from the commencement. Referring to his voluminous correspondence during 1814, he states, that, after reperusing all his letters on the subject, he finds the writers exclusively referring to Ruthwell as the "parent institution," and not in a solitary instance even alluding to the existence of the Edinburgh bank, and particularly quotes Principal Baird, one of the promoters of that institution, in support of the Ruthwell claims.

The cause of truth certainly owes something to those who pressed on public attention imputations which forced Mr Duncan into this trying field. Assuredly nothing short of his high sense of honour and regard for his character, as a man of integrity, could have induced him to enter the lists in a controversy having an aspect so personal; and evidence must otherwise have been lost, which has thus survived to point out the benefactor, to whom the world owes the valuable institutions of which we are now speaking.

This letter was published about the beginning of

May 1817. Mr Lundie, whose interest in the fame of his friend was always more intense than his own, having received and perused a copy of it, wrote to him, freely criticising the production; blaming the modesty of his personal defence; suggesting it as a matter of regret, that he had not given this part of his letter precedence over the other, both in place and in importance; objecting to the style, as less warm and passionate than the circumstances justified; and, in short, expressing his fear that, on account of these alleged defects, it would fail, in a great measure, to accomplish its purpose.

The following is Mr Duncan's reply, which we insert, both because it is characteristic, and because it gives some farther insight into the nature of the controversy, and introduces us to a new stage in the history:—

To the Rev. Robert Lundie.

Dumfries, 12th May 1819.

My Dear Friend,—I had the pleasure of receiving yours yesterday, after I had set out for Dalton to visit my worthy friend Dr Cririe, who has been complaining. Being in the gig, I had an opportunity of reading it on the road, and I thank you very heartily for your candid critique. Of the justice of some of your remarks I am convinced, but with regard to others, I demur. The sentence in the first page in which I decline the combat, is manifestly wrong. The fact is, that when I wrote that sentence, I intended to have settled the point of priority and parent establishment, in a few paragraphs. I was ashamed to bring forward a *personal* claim, in which the public could not be supposed to take an interest, and it was so disagreeable to me, that I determined to get quit of it as quickly as possible. The same reason operated on me in the introduction of the notes. I wrote the *text* first, intending to say no more,—but on reading it over again, I found the *proofs* wanting, and these it behoved me to supply. The *easiest* way of

doing this was by foot-notes, and as I had no time to spare, I adopted it. I am by no means sure, however, that it is not on the whole the best. It diminishes the parade of the defence, and the strong evidence contained in the notes coming on the mind unexpectedly, must carry additional force.

I differ from you entirely with regard to the arrangement, and were I to make the letter go through twenty editions, I would not alter it. It might probably take better at first sight were I to adopt your plan, but it would lose in *moral* character what it gained in popularity. There were two attacks which it behoved me to answer—the one on *my system*, which was of *general* concern—the other on *myself*, which concerned *nobody but myself*. It would have surely been a violation of decorum, to say the least of it, to give the more prominent place to the latter. I am quite sure that to those who read the letter to the end, I will appear in a better light than if I had come forward chiefly in my own vindication ;—and I can scarcely think that persons at all interested in the subject will lay the letter down till they have seen what it contains. It is not so very long, and I hope not very "*prosing*" neither. But I am happy to say that *facts*, those stubborn "chields that winna ding," are against you as well as Mr Forbes. My letter has actually excited a very considerable interest, and thrown Mr Forbes on his back. I heard from Andrew Thomson this morning, who says, " Your pamphlet in reply to Forbes, I have read with great interest and unmingled joy. It is a triumphant refutation. My heart is gladdened to see truth victorious ; and in that great victory to see the high tory tone of your opponent laid so completely prostrate. I shall endeavour, in a few words, to give some currency to the *result* at least of the contest, between you and Forbes ; for I mean to take up the subject of Savings Banks in the June number. I cannot tell you the general opinion that is entertained of your pamphlet, not having had an opportunity of hearing ; but sure I am it *will*, for it *must*, be favourable. Facts are stubborn things—and your reasonings appear to me candid and conclusive. In short, I admire and love your pamphlet."

This you will allow is a great deal from Thomson. Now, my good sir, are not you thrown as much aback as Mr Forbes ? Go ! "hide your diminished head." Seriously, however, there is a good deal of truth in your other observations ; and were a

second edition required, I would avail myself liberally of them.

I have just got a copy of Rose's bill, which, however, I cannot at present send to you, as I am preparing to make out a draft of a bill for Scotland, which I intend to transmit to the different Savings Banks in Scotland for their approbation, with the view of having it brought successfully into Parliament. I have not just now time to enter further into an explanation of my views; but I will submit the MS. to you as soon as it is ready. In the meantime, I should be glad to be assisted with your observations on my Appendix. It is a very important subject, and I am extremely anxious to do it justice. Our member, Mr Douglas, has promised to back me with all his might, and I wish to bring it into Parliament through him, and take it out of the hands of the Edinburgh gentry altogether.

There is nothing very new in Rose's bill as it now stands, except that he has discovered an *unvarying* fund belonging to Government, in which the Savings Bank stock is to be vested. It is that of the Commissioners on the liquidation of the National debt. They are to issue debentures for the Savings Bank money at the rate of 3d. per day (per cent) of interest, which will amount to £4, 11s. 3d. per ann. This is a very considerable object gained.

I wish you would answer the article in Blackwood's Magazine about Savings Banks. It is imposingly written, and may make some impression if not answered, though nothing is easier than to reply to it. I think, indeed, it is already answered in my pamphlet, except some observations about cabals in friendly societies—than which nothing can be more sophistical, but it would be well to counteract the effect of that article, and there is none better able to do it than yourself. * * * * * What does your excellent spouse say to all this rout about Saving Banks? I fear she will think we are forgetting the more needful occupation of *saving souls*. I am very affectionately yours,

H. DUNCAN

CHAPTER XI.

NECESSITY OF LEGISLATION—PROPOSALS ANTICIPATED—PARISH BANK BILL FOR SCOTLAND—OPPOSITION COUNTERACTED.

SOME of the allusions in the letter which closes the last chapter, will be illustrated by what follows. Mr Duncan had from the first foreseen that the permanency and efficiency of the system of Savings Banks must depend on the wisdom of the regulations, by which it was to be carried into practice, and the checks and counter-checks, which might be devised for neutralising the many elements of decay and dissolution which must exist in a system, where conflicting interests may spring up, and an unreasonable selfishness carry it over right and justice. From the first,* he had contemplated the possibility of being forced to seek legislative protection from obvious dangers; and cases were not long of arising, which plainly indicated, that without this precaution legal disputes might perplex the managers of such banks, and that they might even be dragged into court, and made parties to law-suits in which they had

* The earliest regulations of the Ruthwell Bank, dated in 1810, provide that it shall be, as far as competent, placed under the provisions of the Friendly Societies Act, only "until a new Act of Parliament be obtained, expressly designed for the encouragement of Banks for Savings in Scotland;"—thus furnishing another proof of the extensive public application of the system which its author from the first contemplated.

no personal interest. Besides, there seemed to be a loud call for some provision whereby the funds of these institutions might be put beyond the hazard of unfaithfulness or imprudence on the part of managers, and other apprehended evils averted. In the absence of any Act of Parliament for the protection of Savings Banks, it was with some diffidence that the provisions of the Friendly Societies Act had been resorted to for the purposes desired, even as an interim measure.

The following extract from a letter, about this time, expresses his own views on the subject:—

I have said that the constitution of the Parish Bank is founded on the Act of Parliament in favour of Friendly Societies, and derives some of its peculiarities from that source. You know that my design was to bring the parish bank system within the advantages of that Act, and accordingly the Justices of the Peace of this county have given the Ruthwell Bank their sanction as a Friendly Society. How far, after all, they are authorised to do so by law, I am not certain, but you will observe by a decision in our last Circuit trials, that the Judges declined interfering with the Justices in a case relating to a Society, from the principle that there lay no appeal on such a subject from the Justices. This looks favourably for me; but, at all events, I doubt not that an Act of Parliament might be obtained, extending the privileges of friendly societies to parish banks.

It soon became absolutely necessary that no doubt should remain regarding the security afforded by the Friendly Societies Act. After obtaining the best legal advice within his reach, it appeared too probable, that were a case carried into court, any plea founded on that Act, as applicable to Savings Banks, would be found incompetent; and the most unhappy consequences, perhaps the overturn of the whole system, might be the result.

A new Act of Parliament seemed, therefore, impe-

ratively necessary. On 13th March 1817, accordingly, he wrote to W. R. K. Douglas, Esq., M.P. for the Dumfries district of burghs (now Lord William Douglas), suggesting the Friendly Societies Act as the basis of a new enactment for the protection of Parish Banks in Scotland, proposing for this purpose a declaratory act comprehending these Banks under the definition of Friendly Societies, and limiting the deposits to £15 per annum, and £100 in all. The introduction of such a measure, however, was anticipated by the proposal of a bill, a few months later, on the part of Mr Rose, for the protection of Banks for Savings.

It had been originally intended to extend the provisions of this enactment to Scotland, but they were mainly suited to the latitude of England, for which they were framed, and might have done much more harm than good in the northern division of the island. One most objectionable part of the bill, as referred to Scotland, was the introduction into it of many complicated clauses for giving to the banks the benefit of Government securities, necessary for those in England, but worse than useless at that time in Scotland, where the safety afforded by the chartered banks was indubitable, and the interest allowed by their indulgence being one per cent higher than in ordinary cases, considerably more than these securities allowed. Mr Duncan saw the importance of meeting the measure with immediate resistance, and without delay he opened an active correspondence on the subject with the benevolent mover of the bill, as well as with other influential parties, both in and out of Parliament. By this timely and resolute effort he had the happiness to see the bill passed for England and Ireland alone, and the way thus left open for the introduction of a

measure for Scotland, in a form suited to the more simple exigencies of his own country.

To obtain such an enactment, became now the object of his earnest ambition. With the concurrence of Mr Douglas, he accordingly prepared the draft of a bill, expressly adapted to the circumstances of Scottish Savings Banks,* and transmitted copies to the managers of all the Scottish Savings Banks, as well as to various other persons, whose intelligence or professional knowledge might enable them to make useful suggestions, accompanying it with a circular, requesting the parties to favour him with their opinion of the proposed measure. In reply, numerous letters were received from various parts of the country, nearly all of them approving of a legislative enactment, and expressing satisfaction with the main provisions of the bill.

Meanwhile, an unfortunate circumstance occurred, which for a considerable time deprived the promoters of the measure of any communication from a quarter whence it was most anxiously expected. Copies of the draft had been early sent to some of the directors of the Edinburgh Society for the Suppression of Beggars, of which, it will be remembered, the Savings Bank was a branch; and one of these gentlemen was particularly requested to make the proposed bill known

* Its principal objects were to give a corporate capacity to the managers, that they might thus be brought more directly under the protection of the laws, and that the legal disadvantages which attach to the pecuniary transactions of self-constituted bodies might be removed—to exempt the transactions of Savings Banks from stamp duties—to render legal the discharge granted by a depositor during minority—to give to illegitimate children some new privileges with regard to deposits—and to enable managers to pay to lawful heirs the money of deceased depositors, without the expense of confirmation. For reasons already stated, there was no provision similar to that of the English statute for enabling Banks for Savings to invest their money in British debentures.

to the other members of that institution, and to take the earliest opportunity of communicating the result of their deliberations. From some mistake, however, this request was not complied with; and, whilst the friends of the bill were surprised and mortified at the silence of the society in the metropolis—a silence rendered more remarkable, by being contrasted with the ready and favourable answers transmitted from other quarters—the members of that institution were not less disappointed on their side, conceiving that, as they had in their official capacity received no communication on the subject, they had reason to complain of neglect.

As soon as Mr Duncan learned how matters stood, he used his utmost efforts to remove the unfavourable impression, which this apparent inattention had made upon the minds of the members of the Edinburgh institution; and, in consequence of a direct explanatory communication with the official organs of that society, a general meeting of the directors was called, for the purpose of considering the merits of the bill. The result was, a series of resolutions disapproving altogether of any immediate legislative enactment in favour of Banks for Savings in Scotland, and deprecating the discussion of the subject as injurious to the prosperity of these recent establishments. The Edinburgh managers soon afterwards transmitted a copy of their resolutions to the conductors of the Bank for Savings in Glasgow, with the view no doubt of inducing them to second their opposition; but, notwithstanding the influence of so respectable an example, these gentlemen, after ample discussion, passed a resolution *in favour of the bill.*

Anxious to remove, if possible, all objections to a

measure which appeared to himself and many others of so much consequence, he solicited a conference with the Edinburgh directors, under the hope that, by a friendly communication, joined to personal explanations, he might be able to convince them of the groundlessness of their fears, and either gain their co-operation, or at least induce them to withdraw their opposition. The following letter gives an account of what took place on the occasion :—

To the Rev. Robert Lundie.

Ruthwell, 22d April 1818.

My Dear Lundie,—I have been very busy since I last wrote you, and this is my only apology. At present I am little less so; but I am anxious that you should know what has been doing about the Savings Bank bill, and what prospect there is of success. In consequence of the opposition made by the Edinburgh institution, and a letter from Mr Forbes to Mr Douglas, containing objections to the bill in detail, Mr Douglas and I agreed that it would be expedient for me to go to Edinburgh and get the bill thoroughly sifted and prepared before bringing it into Parliament. I accordingly arrived in Edinburgh a fortnight ago, last Monday, and found a note lying for me from Mr Bridges, secretary of the Edinburgh institution, stating that the institution had met that day, and, understanding that I was to be in Edinburgh, had adjourned to Thursday, when, if agreeable to me, they would be glad to have a conference with me. I resolved to accept of the invitation, and in the meantime engaged Mr Home Drummond, Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick, and one or two more, to be a committee of my friends, provided the institution would agree to appoint a committee of their number to confer with them. On the Thursday there was a numerous meeting, and, except Mr Bridges (who stood alone in my favour at the first meeting), Mr Waugh, Dr Baird, and one or two more, they were all determined opponents. Dr Inglis, and William Inglis, W.S., took the lead in the debate along with our old Literary Society friend Hay Donaldson. I stated my views at great length, but avoided enter-

ing into any question which involved law, and finished by requesting a conference with my legal advisers. This was agreed to, not in so many words but in substance. They appointed a committee to inquire what farther steps were necessary for them to take, with an understanding that I, with my friends, should be invited to a conference with them. The hour appointed for meeting was next day at eleven o'clock. I had little time to collect my forces, but contrived to bring forward Sir T. Kirkpatrick, Mr H. H. Drummond, Mr J. Shank More, Mr Forrester of the Bank of Scotland, Mr Hunter, Mr Young, Mr Aytoun, Mr Oliphant, Mr Hector, Mr Bridges, and Mr Henderson. These are all men of great respectability, and, except Mr Forrester, are all either advocates or W.S. The committee of the Edinburgh institution found themselves in the wrong box when they saw so numerous and so respectable a meeting raised on the spur of the occasion; and I was amused to see how they winced when attacked by such powerful artillery. The argument was all against them, but they were not to be shaken in their previous resolution; so after spending breath in vain for about two hours, they left us, and we formed ourselves into a meeting of the "Friends of Parliamentary Protection for Savings Banks in Scotland," and came to several resolutions on the subject. This was on the 10th inst. On the 13th the friends of the bill met again, with the addition of several new supporters, viz. Messrs John and Walter Ferrier, W.S., George Veitch, W.S., Dr Brewster, Dr Baird, Andrew Thomson, and Mr Colquhoun. The bill was thoroughly sifted, and a number of alterations were made. I then got it printed with the proposed alterations, which Mr Aytoun and my friend John Henderson put into shape, and distributed it among our friends, who met again on Friday 17th, and went over it critically and minutely once more; after which it passed through the press a second time, and acquired the form in which you now see it, under the name of an "*Amended* Draught." The previous copy, which I also inclose, was called a "*Corrected* Draught." I wish you would collate them with each other, and with the former draught, and tell me what you think of the alterations. I am, my dear Lundie, most affectionately yours,

HENRY DUNCAN.

Soon after this period Mr Douglas brought the bill

thus *corrected* and *amended* into the House of Commons, when it was read a first time and ordered to be printed. The Session of Parliament, however, being then nearly at an end, it was thought advisable that the second reading should be deferred, in order to give time for collecting still further the sentiments of the public; and in the meantime care was taken to give it publicity, by transmitting copies to the Convener of each county, and the Moderator of each presbytery, in Scotland.

The deliberate course thus pursued was highly satisfactory. It afforded opportunity for gaining the fullest information, and thus rendering the bill as perfect as possible; and, moreover, brought out indubitable evidence that its provisions were entirely in accordance with the sentiments of a very great majority of the promoters of Banks for Savings in Scotland.

The opposition of the Edinburgh gentlemen was not thus to be overcome. Apparently still cherishing the spirit of the "*parentage*" dispute, they brought their powerful influence to bear against the measure. Those features in it which they had allowed to pass without remark in Mr Rose's bill, they represented as useless or positively injurious in that of Mr Douglas; and so vigorous and well sustained were their efforts, that its passing became extremely problematical. On the other hand Mr Duncan could see no substantial reason for hesitation in pressing towards the object on which so many advantages depended. The experience of the working of Mr Rose's Act was all in favour of perseverance. In the southern portion of the island, the system had been spreading with astonishing rapidity; and on 31st March 1818, a few months after the passing of that measure, one hundred and sixty-four banks

had already enrolled themselves under the Act; and L.914,000 three per cent consols had been purchased with the Savings Banks' funds of England and Wales.

To counteract, therefore, as far as possible, the probable effects of an opposition so resolute and well sustained, he published a "Letter to W. R. K. Douglas, Esq., M.P., on the Expediency of the Bill brought by him into Parliament for the Protection and Encouragement of Savings Banks in Scotland;" in which he entered at length into the question, defending each particular provision of the bill against a document which the Edinburgh directors had industriously circulated to its prejudice; and wonderfully succeeded in dissipating the mist in which they had begun to involve the question. The following remarks occur in a review of this letter in the *Christian Instructor* for March 1819:—

"It was extremely gratifying to Mr Duncan, before he began to carry his proposal for an Act of Parliament into effect, that he had the countenance and co-operation of the directors of almost all the Savings Banks in the kingdom. He very prudently transmitted a rough draft of the bill for their consideration; and they not only approved of the object, but communicated some valuable remarks. From one quarter, however, the whole plan met with a very keen and decided opposition—we mean the Directors of the Edinburgh Society for the Suppression of Beggars, and to whose institution there is appended a Bank for Savings. They passed a series of resolutions disapproving altogether of legislative interference in the present circumstances of the case, and deprecating the discussion of the subject as injurious to the prosperity of the establishments in question. And they have circulated their resolutions with a degree of industry and zeal, which indicate not only their sincerity, but their ardour in the business; and show how much they are disposed to sacrifice, in order to defeat Mr Duncan's proposal.

"To counteract the effect that may be produced by an oppo-

sition so eager and so weighty as that of our metropolitans, Mr Duncan published the 'Letter to Mr Douglas,' which is now before us. And unquestionably he has triumphed over them in every possible way ;—in fact, in argument, and in temper. All their objections he has refuted in the most complete and satisfactory manner, and offered such a full vindication of the measure towards which their hostility has been so industriously and powerfully directed, as must remove every doubt which that hostility has excited in the public mind. * * * We hope soon to have it in our power to congratulate its benevolent and patriotic author on the complete success of his measure. And in the meantime we sincerely thank him for his able and unwearied exertions in promoting the cause of the poor."

CHAPTER XII.

INVITED TO LONDON—CORRESPONDENCE—SUCCESS.

At this crisis he was urged by Mr Douglas to proceed to London, that he might lend the aid of his personal exertions to the measure which he had originated. He accepted the invitation of that gentleman, and spent some weeks of the spring of 1819 in the metropolis, enjoying his hospitality, and using the opportunities, which many valuable introductions afforded him, of personally conversing with influential members of Parliament, both in and out of the Administration. Several letters, written from London during this visit, will illustrate his success better than any narration.

To the Rev. Robert Lundie, Kelso.

Albany, Piccadilly, Monday night,
22d February 1819.

My Dear Lundie,—I have little more time at present than what may suffice to thank you, which I do most heartily, for the numerous valuable introductions with which your benevolent and friendly zeal has furnished me, from yourself, from Mr Grey, and from Dr Somerville.

We are going on here slowly but surely. *All* the members, both Scotch and English, with whom I have conversed on the subject, and these are not a few, enter warmly into our views.

I was this morning with Mr Wilberforce, who received me with warmth, and announced me to some friends who were breakfasting with him as the founder of Savings Banks. He says he cannot take the *labouring* oar, but will attend to the bill; and I have sent him the newspapers containing the letters to the Edinburgh managers at his request. I have this moment a very polite letter from Mr Canning, promising to see me after the present pressure of parliamentary business is over, which, however, will not be till the week after next. The members are all busy at present with election committees. Kirkman Finlay is not only friendly, but takes up the cause as *his own*. On Thursday we are to have a meeting of a few friends, among whom Sir John Sinclair's son, a very promising young man, is to be one for considering the bill clause by clause, at Mr Mundel the solicitor's. I have only to-day received your letter to Mr Sinclair; but Mr Douglas had previously interested him in the cause. I have not yet seen him, but will call on him to-morrow. Indeed I intend to dedicate to-morrow to the delivery of your letters.

The bill will not be brought in till next week. In the mean time I am not idle. Indeed the whole labour falls on me, as Mr Douglas is thoroughly occupied with business, his brother being out of town. I now see the absolute necessity of my coming to London, as he had it not in his power to attend to the business of the bill, as is requisite for securing attention to it.

The L—— A——— (now in Scotland) and Sir G—— C—— are, I fear, still hostile; but their hostility will go for nothing. Mr Thomas Kennedy of Dunure, your acquaintance, is very friendly. He is also to be at the meeting on Thursday. On Saturday there is to be a pretty large dinner-party given by a Savings-bank friend of mine, Mr Smith, a merchant here, to a number of members of Parliament and Savings-bank directors, with the view of forwarding our object; and as he has a good deal of influence, and a large acquaintance (he is son of a Bank of England Director), I hope to receive considerable assistance from him. But I will not at present enter into further details. As soon as the bill has been brought in, I will write you again. I am happy in the thought of seeing Mr Henry Grey in London. I have sincerely sympathised in his loss. I heartily wish success to his mission. There is to be a meeting of the Mer-

chant Seamen's Auxiliary Bible Society on Friday, to which I have received a ticket of admission. I am glad of an opportunity of seeing a meeting of this kind, and it is the only one at the present season. I got my ticket from Mr Gladstone of Liverpool, member for Lancaster, who goes with all his family. Lord Exmouth is to be in the chair.

Remember me most affectionately to your *better* half; and kiss my *daughter-in-law* and pupil* for me. You do not mention them, but I take for granted they are well. They were all well at Ruthwell when I heard; but I have had no intelligence of them later than this day week.

This is a dreadfully bustling town, and people pay dearly for their greatness. I would not live such a life for all the wealth and honours the world can bestow. I begin to feel that I have too much of the latter commodity already. Pray for me that I may be *humbled* if I should forget myself.—Yours most affectionately,

H. Duncan.

To Mrs Duncan, Ruthwell.

London, 28th February 1819.

My Dearest Agnes,—

* * * * * * * * * *

I have been very successful since I came to town in making converts to my Savings Bank views. I wish I could flatter myself with being as successful in making converts to *saving*, in a spiritual sense. I inclose one of many proofs of this. I met Lord Minto at the Marquis of Lansdowne's, where I dined on Thursday. I spoke to him on the subject of the bill; I found him strangely possessed with the idea of its inexpediency. He promised, however, to read my pamphlet, which he had not seen. I sent it to him along with the numbers of the *Christian Instructor*, which contain Andrew Thomson's attack on the Assembly's Report, which he wished to see, and *this* is the result. I think it says a great deal for human nature, that every person I have yet met with, who has read my pamphlet, however strong his previous prepossessions, has not only been

* Mary Lundie—who afterwards became the wife of the Rev. William Wallace Duncan, his second son. This designation was of course at the time merely jocular, as she was then a child, scarcely five years old.

convinced, but has *confessed* himself convinced. I scarcely expected to find so much candour. A man who has once committed himself does not like to acknowledge himself to have been mistaken. Sir John Marjoribanks is another instance of this. When I waited on him, he was firm in his opinion that the Edinburgh Committee had triumphantly and incontrovertibly proved that no legislative protection was necessary. I requested him to read my pamphlet, and he now honestly confesses himself a convert to my views. I am to-morrow to have a conference with Sir George Clerk, the member for Edinburgh, and have hopes of even converting *him*. If this can be effected, our business is done. There will then be no opposition, and things will go on as smoothly as possible. If he is obstinate, we will do without him. Mr Finlay wishes for opposition. "Let us see," says he, "what they will make of it." But I am not of his opinion, and hope to conquer by converting like a good Christian, not to convert by conquering like a Mohammedan. In short, though I have met with more difficulties and prejudices than I anticipated, and found it quite necessary to have come to London, yet every thing goes on as well as possible, and there is not now a doubt of success. I must, however, stay in London till the bill is not only introduced, but read a second time, and carried through a committee, and I cannot expect this to be accomplished before the end of next week. With what pleasure do I look forward to the time when I shall have reaped my laurels, and have turned my back on this great city, with all its vanities and vexations of spirit! I believe I shall preach here on Sunday week for the benefit of the Caledonian Asylum, which supports a school. I shall have Mr Wilberforce and all "the Saints"* for my hearers. I dine with Mr Stephen (Mr Wilberforce's brother-in-law, of whom you must have heard) on Saturday. Mr Macaulay has been very kind. I have a world of news to tell you, but must reserve them till my return. O, for my own quiet, or rather *noisy* fireside, with my wife and bairns about me, and a metaphysical controversy with Mr Mitchell and Walter Phillips, and then "Cato is himself again!"

* A well-known *sobriquet* applied to the party of Christian philanthropists with whom Mr Wilberforce was identified.

Thank my dear Douglas* for his very acceptable letter. That boy knows how to win my heart. O that I could but be assured that he will continue to improve as he has done for the last six months! I scarcely know any pleasure on earth that I would not forego for that assurance.

I hope to have a long letter from Ruthwell as soon as you receive this. The boys may easily fill a sheet among them, and there will still be a sheet for you in the frank. Consider, my dear wife and children, that I am literally in a land of strangers, and amongst manners and habits that are foreign to me, and take pity on me!

Monday, 1½ o'clock.—I have this moment returned from a long conference with Sir George Clerk. He is a good deal staggered in his opposition, and I have no doubt will come round like the rest. I have also again seen Lord Minto, with whom I have had some very interesting conversation. Yours most affectionately,

H. DUNCAN.

To Mrs Duncan.

5 Albany, Piccadilly, 9th March 1819.

MY DEAREST AGNES,—To-morrow I hope to be at my *wits' end* with regard to this Parish Bank bill, as you would hear that another meeting is to take place for considering it. I have no doubt of a happy result, although the Edinburgh people are still continuing their opposition. I had a long conversation on the subject this morning with Lord Binning, who enters completely into my views, and is prepared to support us through thick and thin. I inclose a letter to the members (if the frank will bear it), which I have printed and circulated since last meeting on Thursday, and which I hope will do our business. M.P.'s have neither time nor inclination to read *long* statements; and I found this abstract quite necessary, although the other was no less so, and has produced its effect. I find the bill would never have been carried through had I not come to London, so that I must not grudge either the trouble or expense, or even my absence from you, my dearest

* Now Captain Douglas Cunningham Graham, a well-known and distinguished officer in the H. E. I. C. Service on the Bombay establish ment.

Agnes, and my bairns, and my fireside, and all that I hold dear. * * * I am beginning, however, to long most painfully for my own quiet fireside, and the smiling faces of my dear family group. But if I can be useful here, I shall be repaid for this privation.

Your last was most gratifying. To hear that you are all well and happy is every thing to me. The Edinburgh decision * scarcely costs me a thought. I don't want to be rich, and we have *enough*, perhaps *more* than enough.

I shall leave this open till to-morrow, that I may mention the result of the meeting. Remember me to every body. * * * God bless you all, and bring me safe back to you from this head-turning town.

Yours most affectionately,

H. DUNCAN.

To Rev. Robert Lundie.

10th March 1819.

MY DEAR LUNDIE,—I have been dining out, and have just returned (11 o'clock); but I cannot go to sleep without informing you that, after a tough, and at one time a doubtful battle, I have at last carried the day triumphantly. On Thursday last week there was a meeting of Scotch members, at which not more than eighteen or twenty attended, and of these it was evident scarcely half-a-dozen had taken the trouble to read my pamphlet. It had evidently excited no general interest; and although I had a few zealous friends, among whom Mr Elliot Lockhart was one of the most zealous, yet their voice was nearly overpowered by that of William Dundas, seconded by the general ignorance and indifference on the subject. All that my friends could effect was to get the meeting adjourned till to-day. In the meantime, I printed and circulated an *abridged* statement of the case in a letter to the members, and this, with the interest excited by the previous meetings, had the desired effect. I had previously seen and converted Lord Minto and Lord Binning. I had neutralised Sir John Marjoribanks and Sir James Montgomery, and had Kirkman Finlay, Lord Rosslyn, and Mr Gladstone, for my

* Referring to a lawsuit, in which he was a party, connected with the *Courier* proprietary.

firm friends. I knew also that several others were friendly, and that my only determined opponents were Mr William Dundas, Mr Kennedy of Dunure (a clever young man, who had some speculative objections), and perhaps one or two more. I went, however, to the meeting with fear and trembling. The room soon became more full than was expected, and my anxiety increased. Lord Rosslyn was called to the chair—a good omen. Mr Douglas opened the meeting in a business-like speech. Mr Dundas followed with a *cold-water* speech, but added, handsomely enough, that he would bow to the general opinion of the meeting. Lord Binning followed, showing the advantages of the bill; and Lord Rosslyn (though chairman) then made a remarkably good statement of the whole case, which showed that he had studied the subject. I should have stated, that Mr William Dundas expressed his doubts whether the bill could be carried through the House of Lords (even although the general favour of the Scotch members gave it success in the lower House), unless some of the Peers took it by the hand. Lord Binning dexterously took advantage of this, to request Lord Rosslyn to take charge of it in the House of Peers. This proposal was cheered, which brought Lord Rosslyn to his legs. He very handsomely said, that he would undertake it; and so the business closed. Lord Minto made some *flattering* observations, &c. &c. I have no time at present for more on this subject, but inclose a copy of the abstract I printed and circulated here, along with a list of those who were present at the meeting. I heard Mr Grey with very great pleasure on Sabbath. He gave an admirable sermon, which must have produced a strong effect on his audience. It was on Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria—"the living water." I thought all the while how inferiorly that pulpit would be filled by me next Sunday.

Your kind letters have been most useful to me; and I feel pleased to think, that I owe part of my success in this, as well as other instances, to my good friend of Kelso.

CHAPTER XIII.

RETROSPECT—SUCCESS OF BILL—SUBSEQUENT MEASURES—RUTHWELL PARISH BANK—ILLUSTRATIVE CASES.

THE business which had called him to London having been thus put in proper train, he returned home about the end of March, and soon after wrote the following:—

To Rev. R. Lundie of Kelso.

Ruthwell, 1st April 1819.

Here I am, my dear friend, dropt from the higher regions, where I have been soaring for the last six or seven weeks at my own fireside, pursuing again the routine of my humble, but I trust not useless duties; and I do assure you, never poor aëronaut, whose too buoyant vehicle had darted with him beyond the region of the clouds, and beyond the sight of terrestrial things, was happier to plant his foot on terra firma than I at this moment feel in being *myself* again—and in receiving practical convictions every moment that I have once more reached the level of my own proper sphere. I have had a strange dream, from which I am scarcely yet awaked. It has been both delightful and agitating, but I hope it will never return. *Once* is quite enough for the head of a quiet Presbyterian minister. But I must have done with moralising, and come to facts.

I wrote you, I think, immediately after the *second* meeting of the Scotch members in the British Coffeehouse. From that

moment all real difficulties were at an end. It is true that Sir George Clerk, on his return from his re-election at Edinburgh, before he knew how matters really stood, expressed strong dissatisfaction with the bill. But, on conversing with his friends, he found that the tide was turned; and, in an interview which he had with Mr Douglas, in company with the Lord Register, came so far round as to promise that he would offer no opposition. The Lord Advocate was still more favourable. He at once consented that it should be brought in as a public bill, and should receive the sanction of his name. He had been in Scotland during the whole time of the discussion; and when he came to town, Mr Vansittart had, in name of the Treasury, given his consent to the bill being brought in as a public one. The Lord Advocate, therefore, only did with a good grace what he could not help. The bill was brought in and read a first time, as you would see by the papers, on Tuesday week; it was again to be read last Tuesday, I believe. It would then be *committed*, when it will be printed, and lie over Easter. After Easter it will be read a third time, and passed, it is expected, without any opposition. This is highly gratifying. Some alterations for the better have been made on the bill by the committee, but none of material consequence, except that the clause limiting the amount of deposits is *entirely expunged*, and the restriction is placed on the loans to be granted by Government. Exemption from legacy-duty and from the necessity of confirmation is to extend to sums not exceeding £50; and all stamp-duties whatever are to be done away, without any restriction. This is a more liberal arrangement than the other, and is not liable to the objection of meddling with the internal regulations of the banks.

I was examined before the committee on the poor-laws, at the request of Mr Courtnay. I had the privilege of furnishing the committee with the leading questions, which gave me an opportunity of developing the whole of our Scotch system of management, including even our parochial schools, as one means of elevating the character of the lower orders, and raising them above the meanness of depending on charity, as well as of giving them an enterprising spirit, which leads them to seek the means of subsistence abroad, and thus to free their mother country from the burden of a superabundant population, under which England groans. This led to the

consideration of emigration, as the means of freeing England from her extra population, a subject which I conceive to be of great importance. A regular and well-digested system of colonisation would, in its consequences, do away more than half the embarrassments under which the lower classes now labour. I have been thinking of this for some time; but my information is scanty.

I received much kindness from Mr Lockhart Elliot, Lord Minto, Sir J. Buchanan Riddell, and some other gentlemen, to whom you and Mr Grey introduced me. Lord Binning also took an active part in my favour. * * * I regret much having seen so few of the London sights; but I had something else to do, and at last became quite tired of absence from home. * * *

The bill which had occupied so much of his attention and effort, passed the House of Lords on the 2d of July following. This information was communicated to him at Ruthwell by Mr Douglas, who had continued to watch its progress with anxious interest. "You may carry with you," said that gentleman, "the satisfaction of knowing that the Savings Bank Bill would not have been carried except by your visit to London." From various influential parties, including most of the managers of Savings Banks established in the different districts of Scotland, letters of congratulation and votes of thanks for his labours poured in upon him; and he felt the satisfaction attending the faithful and successful discharge of duty, though that had involved no small amount of exertion, anxiety, and expense. One of the most gratifying proofs of the value of his efforts was afforded by the managers of the Edinburgh Institution, who, though they had so strenuously opposed the bill in all its stages, now came forward at once, with commendable liberality, to place their bank under the protection of the new statute.

The first step which Mr Duncan took to render the

Act just passed more accessible and more useful, was to publish and circulate a "Letter to the Managers of Banks for Savings in Scotland," comprehending some observations on the Parish Bank Act, and hints for framing the rules of Institutions taking the benefit of the statute; with an Appendix, containing a copy of the Act, and a schedule explaining the Rules of Succession to moveable property by the Law of Scotland. His correspondence, extensive before, immediately increased to an immense degree, and about this period, notwithstanding the franking privileges of the day, it each year cost him personally nearly L.100—a sacrifice which, though considerable, he was able to make without grudging to the cause of humanity.

Before proceeding to follow the next events which marked the progress of his active life, we prefer, though in violation of chronological order, to occupy the rest of this chapter in summing up what remains to be told of his efforts in the cause which had so long engrossed a principal share of his attention.

In 1824, the time arrived, anticipated by himself, and predicted in the circular sent six years before to Savings Bank directors, with the first draft of his bill, when the Scotch chartered banks found it necessary so to reduce the liberal rate of interest which they at first allowed, as to render it very desirable that the latter should be permitted the option of having recourse to the fund appropriated to English institutions by the legislature. He now proposed, therefore, to apply to Parliament for an extension to Scotland of the privilege of purchasing Government debentures, but without the operation of the compulsory clause, which,

however necessary in England, it was generally believed would operate prejudicially in Scotland. He accordingly drew up a memorial on the subject, addressed to the Earl of Liverpool, then Premier, which he transmitted for signature to influential parties whom he knew to take an interest in the matter, and was gratified to find in their replies, an almost unanimous consent to the views which it embodied. With numerous signatures thus obtained, the document was transmitted; but the reply from the Treasury, communicated to Mr Douglas, and dated April 13, 1824, was unsatisfactory. It was not thought advisable to extend *some* of the advantages afforded by the law in England to the Scotch banks, "without also imposing on them the same obligations." A bill, however, was on the eve of "being introduced, for making some alterations with respect to these establishments in England; and there could be no objection to take this opportunity of establishing *a uniform law*." This alternative the parties interested in the measure did not feel warranted to accept, and it was not till 1835 that negotiations on the subject were resumed.

In that year the Act still in force was passed, by which Savings Banks *previously* established in Scotland are left altogether untouched; but the Act of 1819 is repealed, in so far as regards Savings Banks to be established after the passing of the Act, and all such institutions are placed under the provisions of the Acts which formerly applied only to England. Banks existing previous to this last statute have, however, the option of availing themselves of the same provision. This measure, which exactly coincides in spirit with the one solicited in 1824, Mr Duncan took an

active share in procuring, and it has proved most satisfactory. Under its encouragement Savings Banks have been established in every populous district of Scotland, and the most entire confidence in these institutions has been felt by the people.

The scheme, however, was not for Scotland or Britain, but for the world. A few years only elapsed after its promulgation ere the successful establishment of Savings Banks was witnessed in almost every capital in Europe; and such has been its progress, that at this day there is not perhaps any considerable town in any kingdom of the Continent to which the benefits of the institution do not extend. America has not been slow in following the good example of the mother countries, the results of the measure on that double continent having spread far beyond the Anglo-Saxon race. A most interesting report from Caraccas of proceedings in that country relative to Savings Banks, was received by Dr Duncan a short period before his death; and a second report, with a pamphlet on the subject in the Spanish language, written by a gentleman of weight, arrived too late, alas! to afford him the satisfaction it would have brought.

Thus gratified though he was to the full extent of his ambition, by the rapid and universal adoption of the measure which he had originated, he did not on this account relax his vigilance and solicitude on behalf of the humble establishment at Ruthwell. Here he expected to give indisputable evidence of the practical value of the scheme even in poor and rural districts, and thus *a fortiori* to demonstrate its universal applicability. Far-seeing men had early predicted astonishing results as likely to be realised by its means.

"Mr Colquhoun has observed to me," said Dr Haygarth, in a letter dated 24th June 1815, "that the savings of the lower orders, which might be preserved, would soon amount to between seven and ten millions, and finally to one hundred millions. From a population of 1100, without heritors and without manufactures, you have collected L.1164, being above L.1 for each individual, in four and a half years, in the parish of Ruthwell.* If the same exertions, and with the same success, were made in all other parts of the United Kingdom, the savings of the poor would in four years amount to twelve millions. Your experience has thus justified and confirmed Mr Colquhoun's calculations."

The venerable writer may not have stated the data from which such anticipations might be deduced with exact accuracy. The depositors in Ruthwell Bank were not confined strictly to the territorial boundaries of the parish, and in point of fact in many instances came from various points in the surrounding district; but we may fairly put with this circumstance the fact, which must be more than a counterbalance, that Ruthwell and its neighbourhood are much below the general average of Great Britain in wealth and outward prosperity; and were we in circumstances to make a similar calculation from accurately adjusted data, we should most probably reach even a more favourable result. But, flattering as such estimates certainly were to this rising institution, they became, during the years that followed, more and more remarkably verified by the growing success of the Ruthwell Bank, as will be seen

* There is a slight error here. The case was even more favourable, as this sum was the amount of deposits in 1814, only four years after the establishment of the bank.

by the following statement, adjusted to the close of each successive five years :—

In the Year	Amount of Deposits in Bank.
1815, ...	L.1306 14 9
1820, ...	1912 16 0
1825, ...	2187 19 9
1830, ...	2814 6 6
1835, ...	3326 17 0
1840, ...	2275 10 9
1845, ...	2018 19 0

The maximum was reached in 1835, when the amount of deposits was nearly three times as great as in the year 1814. Since that time, there has been a tendency to retrogression, arising from various causes, among which, perhaps, the most obvious are the establishment of Savings Banks in the neighbouring towns, the partial decrease of the population, and the pressure of the times.

The year 1819, when the first Act of Parliament was obtained, appears to have been remarkable as that in which a very large proportional increase in the deposits took place, amounting to the difference between L.1417 and L.1744. This seems to indicate the public confidence produced by legislative protection.

It would have been extremely gratifying to introduce a few anecdotes illustrative of the advantages derived by depositors from their foresight in taking advantage of the Ruthwell Parish Bank. I prefer, however, a simple statement of the following individual examples, the prosaic details of which will be pardoned, for the sake of their illustrative value :—

A. B., a female servant, began to deposit the sur-

plus of her wages in 1815, and in 1824 found herself possessed of L.15, 18s., the fruits of her honest industry and frugality. A legacy of L.8, at this period, coming into her hands, was wisely added to her store, which now, by its own yearly interest, independently of occasional deposits, began sensibly to increase, and in the course of a few years she married a respectable man in her own station, bringing him not only a portion of L.34 to assist in stocking their small farm, but, what was more valuable, those habits of economy on which so much of the comfort of a humble home depends.

C. D., when a ploughboy, in 1815, opened an account with the bank by a deposit of L.3, 10s. This he augmented from year to year by additions chiefly saved from his wages, till, in the course of seven years, he had no less in the bank than L.58. About this time he married, and his fund thus saved added greatly to the comforts of his cottage, though the expenses of a family, for a few years, somewhat curtailed its amount. After various fluctuations, however, his account again increased, and by-and-by showed a sum of L.61, with which he was enabled to enter into partnership in a thriving country business. This person died a few years ago, respected by all who knew him, leaving his widow (a second wife) and a young family possessed of a fund which has kept them above the reach of poverty, and will probably suffice to educate and support his children, with respectability, till they have reached a period of life when they may maintain their mother, and begin a similar course to that which their deceased parent so honourably pursued.

E. F., a farm-servant, deposited, in 1821, L.2, 9s., and, having resources besides his labour, accumulated

in four years about L.80, which he then drew, for the purpose of enabling him to enter on a small farm. Two years after, he was in circumstances to resume his deposits, which gradually increased for many subsequent years, affording him many facilities, and enabling him at length to engage in farming on a much more extensive scale than at first, and to occupy a sphere, in which he has been long esteemed, as a thriving, industrious, and respectable member of society.

G. H., a female labourer, found herself, in 1821, in possession of L.25, which she carried to the bank, resolving to make it "a nest egg." Remaining unmarried, and so having no family expenses, her little fortune was allowed to grow, till, by successive deposits, scarcely averaging more than L.2 yearly, and the accumulation of interest, it amounted at her death, about twenty years later, to L.70, a fortune for her heir, which, if as economically treated in future years, might soon increase so as to astonish even its possessor, or, without material diminution, might furnish comforts and even luxuries such as he had never expected to be within his reach.

I. J., a farm-servant, by care and saving, during four years, found himself with L.37 in hand, able to marry, and to take a small farm in 1819, thus entering on an independent sphere, which he still occupies, with credit to himself.

K. L., a tradesman, laborious and sober, beginning, in 1821, with a deposit of L.6, possessed in three years a fund of L.58, with which he emigrated.

M. N., a labourer, beginning the same year with L.15, was enabled, in the course of time, to afford his son a classical education, and to aid him with the

means of entering one of the universities, where he studied for the ministry.

O. P., a female house-servant, began to deposit, in 1825, when she lodged L.5 in the parish bank. Remaining unmarried, her savings steadily increased, till, in 1835, being now somewhat advanced in life, she opened a small country shop, which, with the help of her bank accumulations, then amounting to upwards of L.40, she was able to furnish, and where she still continues creditably to support herself.

I might instance many other cases of more or less interest. Of the above, a large proportion, it will be observed, belong to the class of servants; and it is interesting to remark that most of those here introduced had lived under Dr Duncan's roof, at one time of their lives, in this capacity—several, indeed, for many years. The freedom which domestics usually enjoy from any save personal expenses, their comparative security from many of the common temptations to extravagance, and the inducements to economy which a judicious master and mistress may, by their advice, suggest, are all favourable to the success of such persons in wisely providing, during a period of health, for future necessities. Many of Dr Duncan's servants were thus raised, through their own industry, and by an economy carefully encouraged and fostered by himself and Mrs Duncan, above the risk of poverty, affording a convincing proof of the value of the institution, and a strong inducement to others to follow a similar course.

I may conclude this somewhat tedious account, by referring to the means provided in the Ruthwell Institution for defraying the necessary expenses of management. Interest is there allowed to the depositors on

pounds only. The surplus shillings and pence in the several accounts, produce in their aggregate, a small portion of annual interest, which, by the constitution of the bank, is applicable to these expenses. During Dr Duncan's life, however, all the trouble of actuary was undertaken without charge by himself, and many of the expenses of postage, stationery, &c. were likewise defrayed by him; so that this annual sum was allowed to accumulate untouched, and almost unnoticed, for many years. The mention of this fact leads me to draw attention to a circumstance which will come to be more fully noticed at an after part of the narrative. In 1829, these accumulated savings had amounted to about L.70; and Mr Duncan, still having at heart the best interests of his people, conceived the idea of applying this sum to the erection of a schoolhouse, in a distant quarter of the parish, where the inhabitants, who lay beyond the circle of attendance at the parish-school, had been hitherto very ill supplied with the means of education, and where the increasing zeal of his advancing years craved the means which would thus be afforded him of convening his people for prayers or sermon, or Sabbath-school instruction, as opportunity might offer. That no objections might afterwards arise to this appropriation of a fund, which in equity was his own, he proposed it at a meeting called for the purpose, and received a formal authority for this application of the money. A suitable site was accordingly procured, and the erection of a schoolhouse in due time completed.

CHAPTER XIV.

"A TALE FOR THE RADICALS"—LEYDEN—"THE SCOTTISH EXILES"—MECHANICS' INSTITUTES, &C.—BEREAVEMENT.

ONE of the first uses which Mr Duncan made of the breathing-time granted him by the success of the Savings Bank bill in 1819, was to prepare for the press his "Young South Country Weaver," by which he sought to aid in disseminating just political views among the manufacturing masses, at this time unhappily disaffected to the Government. The era was one of alarming popular excitement. The "Cato Street Conspiracy," as it has been called, was only one of a series of indications that disorganising principles were widely spread. While the Ministry of the day were sending out troops and multiplying arrests, good citizens were in various ways expressing their loyalty, and seeking to avert the frightful social evils that seemed to threaten the country. Among the rural parishes, Ruthwell, prompted by its minister, was one of the first to transmit to Government an address, unanimously signed, breathing sentiments of sincere attachment to the constitution. The slight literary effort just alluded to arose out of an application addressed to him by a loyal society in Edinburgh, which

had been conveyed through Mr Forbes, the gentleman with whom he had formerly been brought into such painful collision in the Parish Bank controversy.

When the little work was finished, however, and presented for acceptance, he found that the society had ceased to exist, and he was induced to offer it to some private friends who had united for the publication of popular tracts, and who were carrying on their scheme with ability and success. Through this medium the "Young Weaver" first made its appearance in a series of tracts, which were afterwards enlarged and bound together. A book was thus produced, ranging with "The Cottage Fireside," which, though fictitious, was generally allowed to be admirably suited to the purpose which suggested it. The incidents are numerous and interesting, the characters well sustained, and the dialogue especially valuable, furnishing an able popular exposée of the numerous fallacies in political science which at that time of excitement were industriously propagated by ignorant and designing demagogues. This tale had a rapid and extensive circulation in Scotland, but unfortunately the free use of the northern Doric proved a bar to its progress south of the Solway; and as the causes which called it forth happily died away, it may be classed with other ephemeral productions which naturally fall into oblivion when their end has been served, or which lie ready to be called forth from a temporary obscurity when their aid may again be unfortunately required.

It was in November 1823—that very unexpectedly—he received from the University of St Andrews his degree of D.D. That month was there celebrated by the entrance of Dr Chalmers on his duties as Professor of Moral Philosophy. Many students followed the

illustrious divine from Glasgow, and, among these, the two sons of Mr Duncan. It was on the occasion of his visit to his Alma Mater, in placing them there, that at a public dinner given by the Senatus Academicus, he was surprised to learn from the mouth of the venerable Principal, when proposing his health, that this mark of respect had been conferred on him. He had neither solicited nor desired the distinction, which was often even then—what in a more remarkable manner it seems now to be—conferred with so little discrimination as to render it but an empty honour. In a hurried letter to his friend at Kelso, he gives an interesting account of this visit, and of Dr Chalmers' reception and inaugural lecture, at the close of which he says—

> The St Andrews Senatus Academicus has—unfortunately intending to do me honour—made me a D.D. It was certainly done in the most handsome way, and at a special meeting of the University—entirely without my knowledge, and conferred unanimously—they taking the fees on themselves—my old and venerated master, Dr Hunter, having moved it. All this is gratifying, but does not reconcile me to the honour. I have not mentioned it to a single person but yourself, nor do I mean to do so—nor will I take the title unless it be forced on me.

In the same letter he alludes to a correspondence, in which he was now ardently engaged, with the view of rescuing from undeserved oblivion the valuable and curious MSS. of Dr John Leyden, then lately deceased. This remarkable man was a native of Teviotdale, and, as we have already seen, a classfellow of Dr Duncan's. His extensive attainments in languages had procured for him an appointment in India, where, among similar achievements, his success in interpreting the famous Jewish tablets of brass, preserved in the synagogue of Cochin, which had puzzled all preceding

Oriental scholars, had obtained him great celebrity. On the very day when the island of Java surrendered to the British arms, he plunged with characteristic zeal and imprudence into a library in Batavia, where, lost in the examination of important Indian MSS., he remained, regardless of damp and foul air, till he contracted the fever which closed his researches, by a hasty death in 1811, in his thirty-sixth year. His valuable literary remains, which were now lying in the archives of the India House, might have remained there for ever neglected, had not Dr Duncan, urged by his friend Mr Lundie, and stimulated by a benevolent interest in the family of the departed Leyden, as well as by his literary predilections, opened a correspondence on the subject with Sir Thomas Reid and Sir John Malcolm, who, zealously adopting his suggestions, drew attention to the documents, and exerted themselves in the heartiest manner to procure for the humble family of Leyden a sum of money as their price.

The only part of this collection, which, so far as we know, has yet appeared in an English dress, is "The Commentaries of Baber." William Erskine, Esq. of Bombay, a personal friend not more of Dr Leyden than of Dr Duncan and Mr Lundie, completed the translation of that work, and saw it through the press.

In the year 1826, Dr Duncan wrote one of his larger works—"William Douglas, or the Scottish Exiles"—a tale of the times of the Covenant, in three vols., which he published anonymously.

The novels of Sir Walter Scott had, about this time, taken a powerful hold of the mind and imagination of the country. His delineations of Scottish manners had attracted the attention of the world to our northern

mountains, and the history of former struggles for freedom became to many for the first time interesting. Unfortunately that wonderful writer had no sympathy with the noble martyrs of those bloody times, when religion and true loyalty were driven in Scotland to the dens and caves of the earth, and he had drawn the picture of the heroes of the Covenant in an attitude of distortion and burlesque, but too consistent with his prejudices. Dr Duncan conceived the bold idea of meeting the novelist on his own enchanted ground, and of giving in this work a portraiture of these Christian patriots more accordant with authentic history. It was written partly in the earliest morning hours—by which I mean from four o'clock till eight—so as not to interfere with the duties of the day, and partly at the bedside of one of his sons, who had been seized with fever at college in Glasgow. The plot, though extremely interesting, is all along made subservient to the great purpose which induced the author to undertake the work. One part of the story has been subjected to critical remark, because destitute of probability—I mean the description of a new Utopia, where grace is represented as already paramount and a millenial state begun. The artistic impropriety of this conception he always readily acknowledged; and yet he did not regret the opportunity it had given him of contrasting a state of society like that he had been depicting in Scotland, where malice and cunning and fiendish cruelty were reigning, with what fancy, framing the materials furnished by prophecy, can imagine to be the happy condition of a community whose laws are founded on the Bible, and the will of whose members harmonises with that of God.

His main object—the vindication of the Cove-

nanters, to which the story, with its various characters and incidents, was only an accessory—was allowed to be completely accomplished. "The great merit of the work," as remarked by a reviewer in the *Scotsman*, "and the charm also to those who can enter into its spirit, is the sincerity and earnestness of principle which is displayed and sustained throughout."—"The author has with an eagle's quill," says a writer in the *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, "brushed off the false gloss with which the characters of the persecutors has been invested."—"Such as wish," adds another reviewer, "an honest though earnest defence of early Presbyterianism, will find it in William Douglas."

The following observations occur in an elaborate review of this work in the *Christian Instructor* for June 1827, which we have reason to believe came from the pen of the Rev. David Welsh, then minister of Crossmichael.

"Under the garb of a pleasing narrative, it contains a faithful and impressive representation of the state of Scotland at one of the most interesting periods of our history. It illustrates the influence of different religious principles on characters of similar conformation; it demonstrates the efficacy of a pure religion in supporting the mind and directing the conduct in every variety of circumstances. The part of the work which has most interested us, is that which immediately refers to the Covenanters. Whatever is calculated to draw attention in a proper manner to the state of this part of the kingdom, from the Reformation to the Revolution, we cannot but consider as a valuable contribution to the sacred cause of religion and liberty. * * * It is for this reason that we always feel pleased with any work calculated to convey to the public a juster and more favourable impression. We wish that our author had given us something more systematic. A good history of the period is a desideratum, which we would anxiously desire to see supplied; and we feel that we are paying a very high compliment to the talents of the anonymous

author before us, when we say that he might employ his powers in a suitable manner in attempting the work we have suggested."

One cannot avoid the conjecture that the reviewer enjoyed a little quiet roguery in penning the following passage. It is probable that he guessed at the clerical volunteer as he wrote—

"Some of our reviewing brethren, we observe, complain that he is not scientific as a warrior, and unhorses his cavalry with very little ceremony. Very likely—but he has the spirit if he lacks the science; and though he laughs at phrenology, we suspect combativeness is largely developed. He should not find so much fault with the followers of Cameron and Cargill, for he certainly would have been one of them, if he had not been tempted with a bishoprick. He is obviously as ready to handle a firelock as a text, and would succeed equally well in defending a pass or a principle."

Many years were not to elapse before the cordial attachment shown in this production to the great principles of our Presbyterian fathers was to be tested by the vicissitudes and sacrifices of that great struggle, which crowned the labours of several besides himself of the best and most devoted ministers, who in these latter days have adorned the Scottish Church.

The literary labours above noticed did not by any means engross the whole of his attention. Not only was he regularly discharging the usual duties of his parish, but he was actively planning new modes of usefulness; and about the very time when "William Douglas" was in the press, his lively interest was excited by the opening prospect of popular improvement, favoured by the exertions of several prominent friends of this cause.

The establishment of Mechanic's Institutes, which about this time began to be general, was hailed by such philanthropists as Dr Duncan with a satisfaction

which perhaps their history has failed to justify. The rustic mind, indeed, in remote parishes like Ruthwell, could not be thus reached; but the impulse now given to the cause of popular instruction was not always unfelt even in rural districts; and, as might be expected from all that has gone before, the people of Ruthwell were not neglected. In the absence of other means of enlightenment, itinerant lecturers were from time to time engaged by their minister, and induced by a pecuniary guarantee to reside for a season in the parish, delivering their lectures, and illustrating the subjects they handled by such apparatus as they brought with them; and although the minds of the people were as yet in general too obtuse to admit of eminent success in this department, seeds were at least sown which might have ripened, and may yet ripen, in varied and precious fruits.

A better field, it must be allowed, existed among the spirited and active population of towns and cities, where a thirst for intellectual improvement began to display itself. It was not long before Dumfries followed the good example of other places; and in this enlightened course Dr Duncan took the most hearty interest. Many were the visits which he paid to that town for the purpose of aiding this good measure, and by his means the earliest course of lectures on chemistry and natural science delivered to the members, was arranged and provided without expense to the Institution.

For the objections sometimes urged by good men against efforts like these, arising from their alleged tendency to undermine the people's reverence for religion, he had little sympathy. "Truth," he would say, "cannot oppose truth. Intelligent men—though but

half-educated—in an age like ours, *will* inquire into doubtful and difficult subjects, and no one has a right to prevent them, even were it possible. Surely, then, it is but a duty—on the part of those who have the power—to afford them the aid they need, in cultivating their mental faculties, and in seeking to discover whatever is genuine in science. Any other course on the part of Christian professors naturally throws a suspicion on the claims of our holy faith, while it leaves the instruction of the people in hands to which it may be less safely confided. Let the Christian afford what assistance he can to all classes in the improvement of their minds; let him sympathise with the humbler orders in their laudable ambition to attain a greater measure of knowledge, and he may thus wield an influence by which many may be led to inquire into that infinitely nobler subject which involves the eternal destiny of man."

Such were the views entertained by Dr Duncan. To *guide* the current, *not to stem it*, was the principle on which he acted, and the policy which he advocated. In 1826 he received from Mr Brougham, M.P., a request to lend his assistance to the "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," which had just then been organised, and was vigorously commencing a series of publications intended for the instruction of the people. With that gentleman, ever since their first college acquaintance, he had maintained occasional intercourse; and now that his alert and salient genius had become engrossed with an object so entirely congenial to his own mind, that intercourse became more frequent and interesting.

It was in the following terms that Mr Brougham wrote:—

To Dr Duncan.

"London, November 18, 1826.

"My Dear Sir,—A private committee having been formed here for promoting popular education, by the preparation and diffusion of cheap and elementary works on all branches of science, I wish to engage you to help us—both by suggesting such individuals as would undertake to furnish us some such treatises, and by yourself taking some one or more upon you; and finally, by forming an auxiliary committee for the southern district of Scotland, or north-west of England. What I should like you to take in the first instance, would be the history and nature of Savings Banks. * * * *

"Do you know any one, either as a volunteer or for reward, who will give a popular view of the philosophy of mind, abridged from D. Stewart for example? Or of the history of ancient philosophy—from the great folios that Finlayson used to recommend to us, and which we used *not* to read?

"I wish you would confer with your brother on this subject, and, among other things, give us whatever suggestions occur to you as to the formation of committees in the country.

"You will at once perceive the extreme importance of the undertaking. In truth, there are no assignable limits to the good it may do. The only subjects to be avoided are party-politics and controversial divinity. We ought for some time to be occupied chiefly with the sciences and civil history, to avoid debateable ground. * * * * Yours ever,

"H. Brougham."

The measures of the Society, more fully explained by Mr Brougham in future communications, commended themselves to Dr Duncan's mind as well calculated to spread intelligence among the masses; and a letter of inquiry on the only point on which he felt uneasy, brought from that sanguine friend of popular improvement the following reply:—

"What you say of religion has been much weighed, and I see no difficulty. The tone or tendency of the whole of our operations will be religious—leaving out matters of controversy. In

fact, I do not see how it is possible to teach science without teaching the foundation of all religion; and the doctrine of final causes will be inculcated at every step of both our natural and moral instructions."

This explanation, if not quite satisfactory, was certainly as much so as he had any reason to expect, and probably more than he looked for. He undertook, therefore, to apply to several of his Scottish friends, with a view to secure their aid and co-operation, especially in departments connected with moral science and with history; the proper exposition of which to the masses, for whom the work was chiefly intended, he believed to be of mighty importance. He accordingly applied in several quarters with various success. One disappointment grieved him exceedingly. He had fondly hoped to be able to induce the Rev. D. Welsh of Crossmichael, who had already shown his metaphysical talent in his eminently able "Life of Dr Thomas Brown," to undertake a series of papers on mental philosophy. The following letter shows the reasons which induced that able man, with the modesty of true genius, to decline the task:—

To Dr Duncan.

"Crossmichael, 18th December 1826.

"My Dear Sir,—I really feel myself honoured by your mentioning my name to Mr Brougham; but I am afraid I cannot undertake the work you propose. In regard to a history of ancient philosophy, I am too far away from the great folios of which your friend speaks, to be able to make the boast of despising them. And then as to Stewart, I differ from him so essentially, that I could have no pleasure in giving an outline of his philosophy. Dr Brown comes nearer to my views, and of course it would be easier for me to abridge him; but that perhaps would not suit Mr Brougham's ideas. And besides, I must confess, that the principles of phrenology have so completely taken hold of my mind, that I do not know if it would be right

for me to attempt any view of the human mind, where the new doctrines were not to hold a prominent place. Indeed I feel that it would not be honest in me to blink a question which (right or wrong) I firmly believe to be of essential importance. Besides, writing is such a labour to me, and compilation being to me fully as difficult as original composition, I am doubtful of the propriety of employing the little time I have in writing that which *many many* others would do a thousand times easier and better too. * * * * In these circumstances, I trust you will excuse me for declining what you propose. * * * * People with such heads as you have, can form no idea of the slowness with which such organisation as mine proceeds."

To Dr Duncan's renewed application, accompanied by such a sketch of the proposed work as was meant to prove that the objections stated above need not apply to his case, he still gave a decided negative, adding, under date 20th January 1827:—"I must add, that the outline you have given of the kind of treatise that is desirable, convinces me that you are yourself the proper person to fill it up."

Grieved as he was to find himself unsuccessful, where success appeared to him so important, the last suggestion was too little in harmony with Dr Duncan's general turn of thought to be acted on; his mind embracing the practical much more readily than the speculative. But while he left the subject of metaphysics to other hands, he had no intention of declining personal exertion. He at once engaged to furnish papers, as requested, on Saving Banks, adding a willing offer to write also a treatise on Friendly Societies. He had, moreover, succeeded in securing the co-operation of several of his friends, and among the rest of Mr John William Semple, the translator of Kant, a young advocate, who—though his career afterwards proved short and fruitless—at this time gave promise of high attainments and eminence.

He had at one time formed the plan of preparing—with the aid of Mr Semple and of Mr Thomas Carlyle, a young relative, also at the bar—a history, in three treatises, of the Scottish Struggles on behalf of Civil and Religious Liberty. This had been hailed by Mr Brougham :—"Not three treatises, my dear sir," he said, in a hasty note replying to the proposal, "but thirty times three on Scottish history, if required to do full justice to the subject, will be acceptable, and most acceptable." His friends, however, ultimately declined the task, and his own engagements rendered the undertaking, as a whole, more than he could attempt.

During the progress of these events, the peaceful enjoyment which reigned at Ruthwell Manse had for a season been painfully interrupted in the summer of 1824, when it pleased God to remove by a sudden accident that venerable mother, for the comfort of whose declining years we have already noticed the erection of a sweet and tasteful residence within its precincts. The old lady had lost her balance in stepping from the threshold of her cottage door, and falling, had sustained injuries which proved fatal. The following is extracted from a letter written on the occasion to his eldest son, who was at the time on a visit in Ayrshire :—

To Mr George John Duncan, Largs.

Ruthwell, 21st July 1824.

* * * * * *

This most distressing event, my dearest boy, is not without its alleviations. The accident was such that no one can accuse himself of negligence, as you know it was your grandmother's practice for years to go almost continually to the door for air, without any attendant, and with perfect security. Your uncle and aunt P—— were in the dining-room, the door of which was open, and, hearing the fall, they immediately rushed out

and got assistance in raising her. The medical advice that was procured was the very best the country could afford; and if skill and attention could have saved her, it would have been done. Her sufferings, too, were neither so acute nor so prolonged as the nature of the accident led us to fear. Miss S—— R——, you know, who met with a similar calamity, lingered in torture for more than a year, whereas *she* slept often soundly, and suffered comparatively little; and the suddenness of her release at last was as unexpected as it was a matter of thankfulness. You know how habitually prepared she was for her great change; and this is the most alleviating consideration of all; or rather it supersedes, by its infinite importance, all other considerations.

Your uncle T—— was here on Friday, when he questioned her with regard to her bodily sufferings; and, instead of giving him a direct answer, she said, "I have much reason to be thankful that I have lived so easy a life, and why——?" But here she checked herself, leaving the impression on his mind that she had wished to add, if tenderness for his feelings had not prevented her, "Why should I complain, if it pleases God to visit me with a painful death?" This was the habitual frame of her mind. I well remember, that on the death of your grandfather, the sentiment most commonly on her lips was,—"Shall I receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil also? The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord." What a lesson for us! I regret, my dear boy, that you were absent on this occasion, and at one time thought of sending for you home, but could not persuade myself to break so rudely in on your promised enjoyment.

* * * * * * * * *

We are all as well as possible under present circumstances, and deeply thankful to the Giver of all good for the unmerited blessings that remain. O George! accustom your mind to dwell on the providential care by which we are sustained and blessed; and, above all, on the spiritual privileges and hopes for which we are indebted to the Gospel, and endeavour, or to speak more correctly, pray earnestly and habitually that they may be realised.—God bless you, prays your very affectionate father,

HENRY DUNCAN.

The vacancy made by this painful occurrence in the domestic circle at Ruthwell, was for a season deeply felt by all the members of the little community, to whom the deceased, by the peculiar amiability of her character, had been universally endeared. The cottage, however, was not on this account left tenantless, but became successively the abode of different relatives and friends, and thus still shed an influence over the scene deeper and more felt than even its trellised beauties could have otherwise produced.

CHAPTER XV.

THE POOR—EXERTIONS ON THEIR BEHALF—MANY PLANS—POOR-RATES—THE IRISH.

THE circumstances of the poor of Ruthwell afforded scope for benevolent effort and invention during the whole of Dr Duncan's incumbency. Their condition was often truly deplorable. In favourable times a man's wages seldom exceeded the weekly average of eight or nine shillings, subject to deductions on account of sickness or weather; and very frequently, for weeks together, many of his poor parishioners could find no employment.

For the relief of the misery and privation hence arising, the only legalised charity, in the absence of poor-rates, amounted in Ruthwell for many years to an average sum of about L.34, derived chiefly from church-door collections; and yet, small as this resource must appear, no serious complaint of its inadequacy arose till 1823, when Dr Duncan—on whom, as minister, along with his elders, constituting the session, legally devolved the duty of managing this fund—found it necessary to apply for assistance to the heritors, who, under these circumstances, were the only parties from whom supplies could be demanded.

This application he made by private correspondence, which for important reasons he preferred to the more legal and formal method prescribed by the statute; and the following letter to the factor or agent of one of the principal landed proprietors, will show better than any narrative the position of the Ruthwell session at this period. It was accompanied by a detailed list of paupers, and a state of the accounts.

To J—— S——, Esq.

Ruthwell, 31st December 1823.

Dear Sir,—In compliance with your request to be put in possession of all the facts relative to the state and management of the poor in this parish which I might think of importance for Lord M——'s information, I have drawn up the accompanying statement. A few remarks, however, may make it more intelligible.

The years of scarcity, 1812–13, had a most disastrous effect on the state of our poor, as they were then under the necessity of disposing of all their conveniences, and frequently even of their necessaries, to purchase food. This calamity they have never recovered, for the distressed state of agriculture following soon after, completed their depression. In 1816, however, the session was in possession of a fund of L.15, 17s. 3d., arising from the savings of former years; the pressure on their means of relief not being as yet very great. But this sum had originally been somewhat larger, and was in a state of gradual diminution. The dear year 1817 greatly increased the embarrassments of the parish; and since that period, in spite of the most rigid economy, the disbursements of the session have been yearly swelling in amount, and the supplies they have been able to afford have been quite inadequate to meet the increasing distresses of the poor. At this moment I am about ten pounds in advance to the session funds, although we have expended little more than thirty pounds this year, and have been obliged to give an unusual number of certificates of poverty, for enabling some individuals to ask charity, who could not obtain relief from the parish funds. The reason of this increasing indigence is sufficiently obvious. The embarrassed state of the

agricultural interest prevented, and still continues to prevent, the farmers from employing so many labourers as formerly, and has thus produced the double disadvantage of rendering them unable to cultivate their farms to the proper extent, and of causing them to withdraw from their industrious cottagers the labour on which they depended for support. This, again, affects the interests of those who are incapable of labour, by making it impossible for their relations to support them in the same manner as was customary in better times; for it must never be forgotten, that in those parts of Scotland where poor-rates are not established, the *indigent poor* are chiefly supported by their poor but industrious relations. This latter observation will account for a peculiarity which must strike you on inspecting the list of enrolled poor. You will there observe that, with the exception of two or three individuals, the paupers belonging to the *first class*, who are totally incapable of labour, do not receive a larger allowance from the session than those of the *second class*, who are able to work a little. The reason is, that to the first class the charity of relations and of neighbours comes in place of wages received from labour by the second class, and enables the session to keep their allowances much below what would otherwise be necessary.

* * * *

The letter then goes into a variety of details, and concludes by expressing an opinion, that "it would be well if the heritors were to abstain altogether from requiring any proportion of the necessary contribution from their tenants; and that it would be still better if they would *privately* place in the hands of the session whatever sum might be found requisite." His object being thus to keep the heritors as carefully as possible out of sight, so as to prevent the spreading of the popular but dangerous opinion, that they were legally bound to raise by assessment the funds requisite to support the poor—a doctrine from which, whether legally sound or not, he augured nothing but danger and overthrow to that salutary spirit of independence

which had hitherto so honourably distinguished the Scottish poor.

The following extract may be here introduced as illustrative of the general management :—

To the Same.

* * * *

You are quite aware that it has always been our plan to get the near relations to come forward and give their assistance to the paupers, as far as they were able ; and in this we find ourselves seconded by the feelings of the relations themselves—feelings highly honourable to them, which I trust no demoralising influence will be introduced among us to destroy. Were not this the case, our poor-roll would show a very different amount. On looking over it, you will observe that by far the greater part of the paupers, instead of being able to do any thing for themselves, absolutely require attendance. There are nine above eighty years of age, and as many more upwards of seventy. One is deranged, another is blind, and the rest are all unable to support themselves from ill health ; and yet there is not one of them wholly supported by the session. Even J. G., whose case is at once the most distressing and the most expensive, has a brother (a poor labourer with a family older than herself), who makes occasional donations to the session, to relieve them of part of the burden of her maintenance. With regard to the rest, six shillings a-quarter, or *something less than sixpence a-week,* which is the average of the allowances made to the twenty-two who receive partial relief, sufficiently proves how much is done for them by their relations.

* * * *

Had not the session acted in a prudent and conciliatory manner, as well as with rigid economy, a poor-rate, with all its evil consequences, must long ago have been imposed. We are at this moment threatened with a prosecution for the maintenance of a pauper ; we shall probably avoid it by some small concession ; but if the threat be carried out, and the Court of Session grant the poor man an aliment, I do not see how we shall be able to resist the claims of at least a dozen others.

* * * *

The session does not wish to take credit for its management, but it certainly does not expect to meet with blame; because we are conscious of having done our duty, not only towards the poor, but towards the heritors, under circumstances of peculiar difficulty, of which you are well aware.

* * * *

I have for a number of years been constantly in advance to the session, and the interest on the sum at present due would of itself be a considerable contribution for behoof of the poor. How much more I do actually give, I have no inclination to say. It is impossible, as you know from experience, to live among so much distress without feeling one's self called on to afford relief to an extent which those who reside at a distance could scarcely believe to be necessary. As one instance of the kind of calls irresistibly made on our humanity, I cannot help mentioning, that within these few days I have felt myself constrained to advance several sums from my own pocket to enable individuals on the very verge of pauperism to pay their rents for their wretched cottages, that they might thus be saved with their families from falling into absolute beggary.

I am, with much regard, very truly yours,

HENRY DUNCAN.

It was Dr Duncan's misfortune to find his views sometimes neither understood nor appreciated, where it was most desirable that they should be so. The almost total absence of resident heritors might in part have been compensated by a due and considerate liberality on the part of absentees; but unfortunately his appeals were frequently met by silence, delay, and refusal. Had he chosen to retaliate, he could, by a very simple process, to which in similar circumstances many of his clerical brethren had resorted, have divested himself and his elders of their thankless trouble, and cast the burden of the poor entirely upon the heritors. But this course his views of duty to his parish, and all his principles as a political economist, forbade. Indeed, his chief anxiety was to save the parish from

the very effects which he seriously dreaded as likely to arise from the circumstances. He much feared that the fuller development of the law, sure to follow from the discussion and decision of a few disputed cases of aliment, which the obstinacy of heritors might force into the Courts, would go far to overturn the old Scottish system, which, with all its faults, he believed to be much better than the one that must inevitably succeed.

To avert this, from the first, every effort which ingenuity could prompt or active benevolence put forth had been employed. How many and varied were the schemes to which he resorted on their behalf! Once and again in times of scarcity his early plan—a purchase of Indian meal, for retailing to the poor, at his own risk, and to his own considerable loss—was resorted to. On other occasions, he would provide employment at his own expense for the people. More than once the larger portion of the labourers of his parish have been congregated on the glebe—ditching, draining, forming roads, planting trees, or plashing hedges, according to plans formed, not so much for his own behoof as theirs. For considerable periods, too, with the same view, he became contractor for the repair of the highway which intersected the parish. And when other resources failed, he called the more independent class of the inhabitants together, and induced them to join him in contributing, according to an equitable scale, for the repair of the parish roads.

The confidence reposed in him by the poor was unbounded, and showed itself in many gratifying instances. On one occasion, a contribution had been made for the purposes last mentioned, and wages had

been fixed at the very low rate of 1s. 2d. per day. So dreadful was the destitution at the time, that individuals were known to come to their work without having tasted food for upwards of twenty-four hours, and to labour silently on, till exhausted nature sank under the fatigue. The fund in his hand was by no means inexhaustible—new supplies could not be expected from the same source—and, as the season of relief was yet distant, it became imperatively necessary that every means should be devised for confining the charity to the most needy. At the same time, it was impossible arbitrarily to make distinctions when all pleaded poverty, and the only alternative seemed to be to establish a test, by reducing the wages almost to the starvation point, so as to drive off the less dependent, and leave a larger sum for the rest. It was a severe measure, and his heart revolted from it; but what could he do? Once fairly alive to the necessity of the case, he resolved to leave it in the hands of the people themselves, whose forethought and good sense he thought he could trust. Calling the labourers together, therefore, he clearly expounded to them his difficulty, and then left it to their own decision whether the wages should continue at the former low rate, or whether it would not be more for the interest of the needy class, for whom the fund was gathered, to reduce these from 1s. 2d. to 1s. per day. Where to look for a similar example, I know not; but, to the honour of the Ruthwell poor, the economic argument was successful. They voted the reduction of their own wages, and were thus enabled to weather a storm which at one time threatened the most disastrous consequences.

It might have been expected that efforts like these,

directed by so much sagacity, would be regarded with some degree of favour by heritors, and even to have been cheered and encouraged, not only on account of the benevolence by which they were prompted, but because of the favourable effect they were calculated to have on their pecuniary interests. It cannot be doubted that the demands on the legalised charity of the parish were greatly diminished in consequence of these enlightened exertions; and had he been furnished with supplies to meet demands which really could not reasonably be resisted, he would have been enabled to suppress, within his own sphere, murmurs resulting at last in a series of lawsuits, by which enormous expenses were accumulated, and, what was far worse, the poor themselves taught to look—not to their own resources, as they used to do—not even to the minister and session, but to the landed proprietors; and failing them, to the courts of law. This, however, was not put in his power. Generally successful in their ultimate appeals, the poor learnt to *demand as a right* that assistance which formerly they received with gratitude. Relations lost their high sense of the obligations of kindred, while the tenants, who were all liable to be taxed for the poor, ceased to grant voluntary relief to those who had been so apt in learning to enforce their legal claims.

Thus in a few years the whole system underwent a revolution. Similar results arising simultaneously in other parishes, the infection spread over the whole land. For many subsequent years, the mischief continued to increase, till at last—what wise observers like Dr Duncan had long predicted, has come to pass—the legislature has interfered to check an evil which threatened to become intolerable; and in doing so, has

run the risk of confirming in Scotland some, at least, of the lamentable evils of English pauperism.

A correspondence which took place about this time with the noble lord to whose factor these letters were addressed, proved how little his plans and principles relative to the poor were appreciated by that nobleman, who—apparently impatient under the arguments and illustrations by which he continued, in a series of replies, to maintain his positions—first attacked his Parish Bank, which he characterised as a failure; and then suddenly ceased his communications, stating, in a letter to his factor, which he desired him to communicate, that he had discovered that Dr Duncan entertained the most opposite ideas from his own on the question of the poor, *and therefore he did not want to enter into discussion with him.* He at the same time desired certain explanations, which Dr Duncan—overlooking the discourtesy of the proceeding—gave in the following:—

To J—— S——, Esq.

Ruthwell, 3d July 1824.

Dear Sir,—I have received your note, enclosing an extract from Lord ———'s letter to you, in which he notices a statement that I thought it right to make to him, in consequence of a letter he did me the honour of writing me on the management of the poor.

The paragraph of his Lordship's letter which I used the freedom to answer is expressed in these words:—

"I cannot help observing, that the advantage of Savings Banks has not been very sensible at Ruthwell. Without manufactures, in which there is always a fluctuation, without any adequate cause, the provision for the maintenance of the poor is much greater in that and other parishes in Annandale than it is in ——shire. Assessments, it is true, have been avoided,

but unlimited and injudicious voluntary contributions have the pernicious effect of increasing the number and misery of the poor," &c. &c.

Now, I was quite sure that this paragraph was written under an erroneous impression, and I conceived it to be a duty which I owed, both to the kirk-session and to the paupers of this parish, to undeceive his Lordship. I will confess, too, that I had a strong personal desire to show his Lordship that there was at least *something* in my management which was not so adverse to his interests as he had been unhappily led to believe; and I rejoiced in the opportunity of doing this, which he had himself been so obliging as to open to me. As his Lordship had contrasted the management of the poor in —— shire with that of Ruthwell, I thought the best way of convincing him of his mistake was just to give a plain tabular statement of facts, extracted from the Assembly's Report to the Committee on the Poor-Laws, printed in 1820 (not the incorrect Report of 1819); and as an impartial selection of cases was advisable, I adopted those parishes of which his Lordship is patron, supposing it most probable that he might have property in some, if not all of them, and that he would thus have the readiest opportunity of ascertaining the correctness of the data on which I proceeded. You will easily believe that I could have no other reason for this selection, when I inform you that if, instead of this, I had taken the average expenditure of all the parishes in the Presbytery of ———, as reported by the General Assembly, I would not only have more directly met his Lordship's statement, but would have shown a result much more in my favour, as you will see by referring to the following scheme :—

Presbytery of ———.

Population in 1811.	Poor.	Collections in Church.	Other Sessional Funds.	Voluntary Contributions	Legal Assessments.	Total Funds.
46,997	1164	£990 15 9	£485 14 8	£2609 4 1	£1180 17 1	£5266 11 7

Highest rate of allowance, ... £6 0 0
Lowest, ... 1 9 0

Now, as there are 1200 inhabitants, or thereby, in the parish of Ruthwell, had the provision for the maintenance of the poor been as great as on an average it is in ——shire, it would have stood in round numbers thus :—

Population.	Poor.	Collections in Church.	Other Sessional Funds.	Voluntary Contributions.	Legal Assessments.	Total Funds.
1200	34	£29 0 0	£14 0 0	£76 0 0	£34 0 0	£154 0 0

Rate of allowance to paupers—Highest, . . . £6 0 0
Lowest, . . . 1 9 0

Instead of which, it actually is

Population.	Poor.	Collections.	Other Funds.	Vol. Contributions.	Assessments.	Total.
1200	18	£25	£11	£6	None.	£42

Rate of allowance—Highest, ... £2 16 0
Lowest, ... 0 11 0

So that the funds actually employed to support the poor in the Presbytery of ———, relatively to those employed in Ruthwell, are very little short of being *as four to one.*

* * * *

In the extract from his Lordship's letter which you quote, he says that I attempt to prove that the parishes in ——shire with which he is connected cost him greater sums than Ruthwell. If I said any thing like this, I must have very ill expressed my meaning. I had not the rudeness to mean any thing personal. I wished merely to vindicate the management of the poor in Ruthwell, which his Lordship had contrasted with that of ——shire. It is quite true that the poor of the parish of S——— cost his Lordship individually less than those of Ruthwell. But why? The session of S—— happens to have funds to the amount of £50 a-year over and above the collections, which stands in place of contributions from the heritors, and may be considered as so much money put into their pockets. If we had one half of their funds, we would not apply to the heritors for a single farthing. The question is, does the parish of S—— support its poor as economically as that of Ruthwell? It is quite evident that it does not. Indeed, there is not a parish in the whole Presbytery that does so.

I am extremely sorry that my views on the subject of the poor should happen to be in any respect opposed to those entertained by his Lordship. * * * I can only say, that ever since I turned my attention to this important question, which has been since my boyhood, I have lamented that the poor should have a legal right to *demand support*, and have in various ways used my endeavours, in my humble sphere, to obviate the evil. It is true I cannot yet see my way so far as my much esteemed friend Dr Chalmers, although none would more sincerely than myself rejoice in the success of his benevolent schemes.

There is just one other subject, on which I wish to say a single word before I conclude. His Lordship seems to doubt of the efficacy of the Savings Bank scheme, arguing from the state of pauperism in Ruthwell. I am anxious that he should be put right in this matter. The Ruthwell Parish Bank was only established in 1810, when by far the greater part of the present paupers were upwards of sixty years of age, and all of them, except two (one of whom is blind, and the other bedrid), were

at least fifty-six. I need not say how foolish it would be to expect that poor women (for they are all women except four) should, after that time of life, be able to lay up a provision for old age in a parish bank. But it gives me sincere satisfaction to assure you, that I have already had most unequivocal proofs of the efficacy of our bank in lightening to the session the burden of pauperism in another way. In a number of instances, sums have been drawn from the bank to support poor relations, or to pay for the expenses of their sick-bed and funeral, which must have otherwise swelled the amount of the session's disbursements. I could mention particulars were it necessary, but I have already written at too great length. I am very faithfully yours,

HENRY DUNCAN.

We cannot close this chapter without noticing one circumstance which exercised during the whole of Dr Duncan's incumbency a serious influence both on the physical and moral condition of his people—I allude to the perpetual influx among them of low Irish, who, having no taste for social comforts, could afford to undersell the native labourer in the labour-market—and whose ignorance and inferior morality contributed to deteriorate the general character of the population.

It was impossible not to regret the degraded state in which many of these poor creatures arrived, or to avoid desiring, either that they had remained at home, or that they might be brought under humanising influences in the country of their adoption.

I remember a circumstance which afforded a laughable example of the strange extremes to which Irish superstition often leads. Dr Duncan happened to be walking in front of the manse one fine day in summer, when, emerging from beneath the broad lime trees that overshaded the path to "the Cottage," he was accosted very civilly by a man, whose Milesian aspect and appearance were not to be mistaken—

"Would your Reverence have the kindness to christen a baby?" was the purport of his address.

"Who desires it?" rejoined Dr Duncan.

"Myself, please your Reverence," the stranger replied.

"But who are you? I never saw you before. Are you a parishioner of mine? Are you a Protestant? Surely you don't attend church;" were expressions that quickly followed, suggesting a variety of difficulties.

"True for you," said the Irishman, "I am your parishioner, for I live in your parish, and have done these six weeks bygone. And as for attending the church, Reverend Sir, I must inform your Reverence I once heard a Protestant preacher in Armagh; but I took a complaint in my lip the week after, and I vowed to the Virgin, if she would recover me but this once, I never would enter a Protestant church more. So I could not, if I would, come to your church; and that is the only reason, your Reverence. But if your Reverence would come to my cabin, and christen the baby, I'd be for ever obliged to ye."

In reply to this singular statement, Dr Duncan, repressing any tendency to be amused, addressed the poor man very seriously, showed him the folly and sin of his vow, and tried to convince him of the necessity of seeking light from Scripture. This address had taken a very solemn turn, and the Irishman was evidently impressed with no common seriousness, when a tame monkey, a pet of Dr Duncan's, which had been watching the interview from an overhanging branch, entering into the spirit of the moment, leaped on a sudden upon his master's shoulder, grinned, chattered, and stretched out its little paws in frightful and threaten-

ing grimace towards the Irishman, seconding, in a most unexpected manner, the condemnation of his conduct which had just been pronounced. Horror-struck, the unfortunate man, imagining poor Michael nothing less than a familiar spirit come to enforce the lessons of the Protestant priest, fell on his knees, and prayed for mercy—"I'll do any thing your Reverence bids me—say the word—I'll come to church—I'll read the Bible—any thing, your Reverence—any thing—only don't let the crathur come near me."

CHAPTER XVI.

ANTIQUARIAN RESEARCHES—IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY—DR BUCKLAND.

In the midst of his varied labours Dr Duncan always found sufficient time for occasional excursions into the fields of taste and of science. Though we would scarce claim for him the formal title of antiquary or geologist, he had the merit of drawing attention to some important facts connected with the investigations of both. I allude particularly to his successful efforts to rescue from oblivion one of the most unique monuments, still existing, of the darkest period of British history—a remarkable Runic cross, now standing in the manse garden; and to his geological discovery of the traces of four-footed animals in the new red-sandstone, the importance of which can only be estimated by those who have some acquaintance with previous theories.

With regard to the Runic pillar, its whole length is seventeen feet six inches, being four-sided, and covered from top to bottom with sculptured figures and allegorical designs, accompanied by inscriptions, partly in Roman and partly in Runic characters. Whatever may have been its origin or early history, there can

be no doubt that it is one of the very few unequivocal vestiges of Anglo-Saxon sculpture in Britain—that it was an object of worship in Popish times; and that accordingly, in 1642, an order was given by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for its demolition. On Dr Duncan's accession he found this remarkable relic lying in detached fragments in the churchyard, exposed alike to the action of the elements and the thoughtless violence of childhood. To rescue it from destruction, and secure, as far as possible, its preservation for ages to come, he erected it, in the year 1802, on the spot where it now stands. This, however, was not done without considerable labour and expense; and no pains were spared by him to recover several portions of the pillar which were obviously amissing. In this endeavour he partly succeeded; but as the transverse arms of the cross were nowhere to be found, he undertook, from a comparison of this monument with drawings of similar relics, to restore the missing fragment, as nearly as possible, in its original place and form. This he accomplished by the aid of a country mason in 1823.

Nothing could exceed the care bestowed by him, from year to year, in deciphering the curious inscriptions, clearing from them the moss, and endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of the singular symbols and figures which crowd every inch of its surface. Well does the writer * recollect the happy hours spent in assisting him in these labours, and particularly in preparing a model of the monument, which he afterwards presented to the Scottish Antiquarian Society, and

* The Rev. W. Wallace Duncan, of Peebles, who has furnished this chapter.

which is still to be seen in their very interesting museum. Another, on a much larger scale, and now in possession of his family, he subsequently executed entirely with his own hands, the sculpture being admirably imitated in bees' wax; and, as illustrative of his high artistic skill, it may be here mentioned, that, when effecting one of the many alterations which he made from time to time on the structure of the manse, he contrived, by an imitation in stucco work, to adapt the richest portion of the ornamental sculpture to the purpose of a cornice in the drawing-room.

The general results of his inquiries regarding this mysterious monument of antiquity, Dr Duncan has left on record in his statistical account of the parish. But the more minute and scientific relation of them he reserved for a masterly paper on the subject, contributed by him to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, as a corresponding member of that learned body, in the year 1832. This was accompanied by a most elaborate drawing of each of the four sides of the column, and of the pedestal of a baptismal font, believed to have some connexion with it, along with a detailed and valuable statement of the results of certain investigations into the true interpretations of the Runic characters, furnished him by that celebrated Scandinavian scholar, Mr Thorleif Gudmonson Repp, of the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. For that paper, and its accompaniments, Dr Duncan received the special thanks of the society, which were communicated to him in a long letter from Donald Gregory, Esq., their secretary, from which we present an extract:—

"Edinburgh, 11th December 1832.

"My dear Doctor,—I have much pleasure in communicating to you the special thanks of the Society of Antiquaries of

Scotland, not only for your valuable paper on the subject of the Runic monument of Ruthwell, and for the beautiful drawing of the monument, which must have cost you so much pains and labour, but also for the care you have, for thirty years past, taken to preserve from destruction this most interesting relic of former times. Were more of our clergy than we can reckon upon at present as contributors to the society, to show but one half of the zeal which you have exhibited in this instance, the Transactions of the Antiquaries of Scotland would not suffer by a comparison with those of any similar body in Europe. Let us hope that your example will be followed.

"Our meeting last night went off with great eclat, your paper being the principal part of the entertainment.

* * * * *

"My dear sir, yours most faithfully,

"DONALD GREGORY, Secretary S. A. Scotland.'

But if the services so cordially contributed by Dr Duncan to antiquarian science were thus recognised by its warmest votaries in this country, those which he rendered to geology were even more important, his discoveries having constituted, in the opinion of one of the most eminent living geologists, a new era in the science. For many years Dr Duncan had heard reports of the existence of strange footmarks on the sandstone strata at Corncocklemuir—a quarry about fifteen miles from Ruthwell—but being aware of the generally received opinion, that the *new* red-sandstone, which lies immediately over the coal formation, must have been deposited at an era when no quadrupeds of a higher order than reptiles existed upon the earth, he long concluded that these reports must have originated in mere imagination. Nor was this impression by any means weakened in his mind, on learning that a well-known professor of natural science, who resided occasionally within a few miles of the quarry, so scouted the idea of its being possible that such footmarks could

exist in the new red-sandstone, that he refused even to take the trouble of paying a visit to it for the purpose of inquiry. At length, however, having seen a very remarkable specimen of these footmarks at Dormont House, and being convinced that they were no other than they appeared to be, he resolved to take the earliest opportunity of inspecting the quarry in person. This accordingly he did, one fine day in the summer of 1827, and he returned home convinced that whatever surprise the announcement might occasion, the fact could not be questioned, that at the remote period when the new red-sandstone was in the act of forming, four-footed animals, of several species, had imprinted indelible footmarks on the surface of its strata. In various parts of the quarry he beheld numerous impressions so exceedingly distinct and well defined, and so exactly resembling the prints of such animals, that no room was left to doubt of their identity. Indeed, the writer of this, who accompanied him to the quarry on a subsequent occasion, on seeing some of them, could hardly believe that the stone was not yet as soft as sand, and that the animals had not passed over the face of the rock only a few minutes before, although he was aware that strata, to the depth of upwards of forty feet, had but recently lain above them. Some of the prints were larger than others, but all of them were of rather an uncommon appearance, and one, in particular, was at least as broad as that of a calf's foot, while the impression was so deep—passing, indeed, in some instances, right through the upper stratum, and imprinting itself upon the one immediately below it—as to prove that the animal to which it belonged must have been of considerable weight. Having, by careful inquiries on the spot, and

by actual observation, armed himself with a series of particulars, such as he knew could not fail to confound the minds of the most distinguished and learned geologists, and being well aware how great would be the scepticism with which any statement of his own, in regard to these footprints, would be received by scientific men, he resolved to open a private correspondence on the subject with Professor Buckland of Oxford, in whose philosophic candour he had some confidence, previous to exposing himself to the storm of ridicule and opposition which he could not help anticipating. In reply to his first communication he received the following characteristic letter:—

"Oxford, 17th June 1827.

"Reverend Sir,—I was yesterday favoured with your letter respecting the supposed impressions of the feet of animals in the sandstone quarries of your neighbourhood, and shall have great pleasure in examining the casts you propose to send to London, whence they may be forwarded any day, by coach, to Oxford. As soon as I have seen them I will give you, with much pleasure, my best opinion respecting them; but I had much rather see *one of the actual marks on the stone itself*, in a slice cut off from the block, than a hundred casts. However much the cavities in question may resemble the prints of an animal's foot, I strongly suspect they must be cavities resulting from the decay of some organic body, probably a shell that was once inclosed in the rock, and has subsequently perished. I know of two species of shells that have been often taken for the feet of animals; but, till I see your specimens, I can, of course, give no farther opinion than a general one, *against even the remote probability* of the marks you mention being the impressions of feet. You may, however, depend on hearing my farther opinion as soon as I have an opportunity of seeing what you propose to send up for my inspection. Allow me to thank you for your kind attention, and believe me to remain, sir, your obliged and most obedient servant,

"Wm. Buckland."

The casts, to which reference is made in the pre-

ceding letter, Dr Duncan had prepared with the utmost care, and, on receiving them, Dr Buckland, in the true spirit of a philosopher whose mind is open to conviction, wrote—"As far at least as I can judge, from the specimens before me, I am strongly inclined to come over *in toto* to your opinion upon the subject." He could not, in fact, against the evidence of his senses, deny that the marks were those of some kind of four-footed animal. Anxious, however, now to ascertain what the quadruped was, "and being led," as he said, "to look to our recent crocodiles, or tortoises, for the living counterpart of these impressions," he made several curious and somewhat amusing experiments with animals belonging to these genera, by causing them to march over soft dough and wet sand, the result of which led him to refer at least some of the footmarks to animals of the tortoise kind. After giving a particular account of these experiments, he goes on to say—"The difficulty is to explain, why sand so soft did not subside, and obliterate the cavities before, or during, the arrival of the next superincumbent bed of sand which filled up and preserved these impressions. Elongated excavations, similar to those last spoken of, are made by hares and other quadrupeds in moving over soft and half-consolidated snow." This was indeed a difficulty, but there were also others. For example, some of the impressions could not be referred to these animals; and this remark especially applies to what we have called the calf-like footmark; and then the steep inclination of the sand-beds, which the appearance of the marks plainly demonstrated, must have been the same at the time when these strange creatures had crawled over them, seemed to present another mystery—the dip of the

quarry being in most places 38°, and in some as much as 40°—and there was, besides, the extraordinary fact, that the prints occurred not on *one* stratum only, but on *many* successive strata; "a fact which," as Dr Duncan remarks, in a very full account of these wonders, afterwards prepared for the Royal Society of Edinburgh, "leads the mind into the remotest antiquity, and perplexes it in a maze of interminable conjectures as to the state of the earth's materials when these living creatures walked on its surface, and bathed in other waters, and browsed on other pastures; and not less as to the extraordinary changes and *convulsions* of nature which have since taken place, and which have broken up, overturned, and remodelled all things." The news of this discovery soon spread among geologists, and, as had been anticipated, it gave rise to a considerable ferment. Among other sceptics on this subject, Dr Duncan was honoured by a visit, during that very summer, from Professor Sedgwick of Cambridge, and Roderick Murchison, Esq., who carried away with them several specimens from Corncocklemuir, which unfortunately were not by any means so perfect as those from which Dr Buckland's casts were taken; and in reference to these deservedly celebrated geologists, the Oxford professor writes—"My friend Mr Chantrey, the sculptor, who has seen the casts and specimen you sent me, has no kind of doubt that these impressions are footsteps; but I find Professor Sedgwick and Mr Murchison brought away a different opinion as the result of their visit to the quarry. I have only seen Mr Murchison, who tells me Mr Sedgwick was, like himself, not convinced by the very imperfect and uncertain marks they could find on visiting the quarry. I can only say, that two

small single impressions Mr Murchison brought away with him confirm me still more in my opinion; and so successful have I been in making converts, with the single specimen I have from you, that if you could send me one or two more, on the real sandstone, I am sure I should bear down all the opposition (which is now very strong) to the belief in your hypothesis among the geologists of London." Having occasion, some years after, to write to Dr Buckland, regarding similar appearances in another quarry near Dumfries, he received a reply, from which we extract the following valuable testimony:—"I look upon your discovery *as one of the most curious and most important that has been ever made in geology;* and as it is a discovery that will for ever connect your name with the progress of this science, I am very anxious that the entire evidence relating to it should be worked out and recorded by yourself."

I have only to add, that all doubts have long since vanished from the minds of geologists, and that Sir David Brewster, in a remarkable article in the first number of the *North British Review;* Mr Ansted, in his very interesting elementary work on geology; and Dr Chalmers, in a paper which we have yet to notice, all agree with Professor Buckland in the value which they ascribe to this discovery. Nor is it the least remarkable circumstance connected with it, that Dr Duncan's attention was first devoted to the subject while he was as yet but a tyro in the science, and that he had resolution, notwithstanding, to maintain and make out his case against the united authority of the whole race of contemporary geologists.

CHAPTER XVII.

POLITICS—ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL—PRESBYTER ON THE WEST INDIA QUESTION—EMANCIPATION.

In the stronger sense of the word, Dr Duncan could not be called a politician; and yet he generally formed a deliberate and decided opinion on the public questions of his day. The principles of Adam Smith had early commended themselves to his mind, and while he always preserved his characteristic moderation, he did not shun, on proper occasions, frankly to avow his sentiments, which were more liberal than had been usual in a body so Conservative as the Established Church. In 1820 he went so far indeed as to publish several "Letters" addressed to W. R. K. Douglas, Esq. M.P., advocating the Abolition of Commercial Restrictions, the spirit of which may be understood by the quotation of a single sentence,—"What a proud spectacle," he exclaims, "for Britain, after crushing the power of Bonaparte, to stand forward as the asserter of Universal Freedom of Trade!" Such subjects, however, occupied but a small and occasional share of his thoughts. He felt more warmly on political questions in proportion as they seemed to involve the moral and physical welfare of his race, and it was

only as a Christian and philanthropist that he ever echoed any of the cries of party.

In the year 1829 the Roman Catholic Relief Bill received the sanction of the Legislature. His views had led him—whether right or wrong—to favour the measure, which he considered one of essential justice to a class of his countrymen long unwisely depressed below the political level of British freemen. Perhaps a generous sympathy led him, and many other stanch Protestants of similar temperament, too far, when it induced them to believe that the improvement, enlightenment, and probable conversion of this extensive class, were likely to be promoted by the removal of the disabilities of which they so loudly complained. The popular mind, especially in rural districts, was powerfully affected by a dread of this measure. And during Dr Duncan's absence for a few weeks in March of that year, the question was suddenly and violently agitated in the parish of Ruthwell. On his return he was solicited to promote petitions in opposition to the Bill, which an imperative sense of duty forced him to decline. This was the first time, during a ministry of thirty years, in which he and his people had not gone cordially hand in hand, and he took the earliest opportunity of making known to them his reasons. This he did by printing and distributing among them "a Letter," addressed affectionately to themselves, in which he argued the question at considerable length; and "the effect which it suddenly produced in calming the minds of his people," he says, "exceeded his most sanguine expectations." This gratifying success induced him to follow it up by four additional letters of a doctrinal and expository character, which in like manner he gratuitously circulated among his parishion-

ers, "with the view," as he expresses it, "of turning to their spiritual benefit those recent public events by which their feelings had been so strongly excited." That his own views of this subject were afterwards greatly modified by results, he had the unhesitating candour to acknowledge. He never, indeed, came to regret that the measure had been allowed to pass, but he became convinced of what, before trial, he was slow to admit—that it is hopelessly vain to expect the amelioration of society from the aid of Popish priests and politicians; and he therefore ceased to vindicate the measure, except on the ground of a necessity, which admitted no alternative short of that desperate one, a civil war. Not admitting what many good men assert, that an act of national sin and apostasy was committed by this change, and viewing it, as he felt at liberty to do, only in the light of its political expediency, he could never be brought to acknowledge its impolicy.

On the question of *Slavery*, he from the first joined those who sought its entire and final abolition. But he saw in this subject, as events more fully developed it, greater difficulties than some of his friends would admit. So early as 1814, he had been diligently engaged in promoting petitions to Parliament against the renewal of the Slave Trade—from Dumfries, from Ruthwell, and from the Presbytery to which he belonged. And he had omitted no subsequent opportunity of manifesting his sympathy with that degraded race, who for so many years were held by British law under a detestable and ignominious bondage. In 1830 he published, in the *Dumfries Courier*, a series of "Letters on the West India Question," under the signature of "Presbyter," addressed to Sir George

Murray, Colonial Secretary, the object of which was to propose to the Legislature, and to recommend to the West India Planters, a measure which, while it should secure speedy freedom to the slave, should also avert the risks which none could help dreading from rash and premature legislation.

The subject was one of extreme delicacy, as well as importance. The British public, inflamed by their unquenchable love of freedom and of justice, demanded the immediate liberation of the slaves in all our possessions, and the public press only gave expression to the voice of the country, when it echoed with indignant repetitions the cry for Emancipation. Great organic ameliorations, however, cannot always be safely or justly effected by a *coup-de-main*, and even a grievous wrong may sometimes be removed so rudely as to injure rather than benefit society. The violent language of many anti-slavery advocates, indeed, threatened to defeat its own object, for it put the planters, in whose minds the ruin and massacres of Hayti were still fresh, in the attitude of a desperate self-defence.

Meantime, every thing seemed to forebode a fatal struggle. Confusion was rapidly increasing beyond the likelihood of a safe remedy. The outcry of contending parties completely drowned for a time the voice of reason, and prevented calm discussion; while the danger became every day more imminent, that a hasty measure, prompted by the generous but impetuous spirit of British freedom, might cut the Gordian knot, and produce consequences which the stoutest heart dared not contemplate. Dr Duncan saw the danger of the crisis from the loopholes of his retreat, and, prompted by a sincere desire to pour,

were it but a drop of oil, on the troubled waters, he began the "Letters" just alluded to.

In these he pleaded for Emancipation as a divine right, founded, not indeed on express precepts, but on the great Christian law of love; he branded the measures by which slavery had been at first imposed on the helpless Africans, as anti-Christian and detestable; and he called on parties to unite in doing justice to the oppressed. But he did not acknowledge that an act of *immediate manumission, without conditions*, would cover all the requirements of the present case. He contended that this would fail to benefit any party. He showed that the slaves were steadily, though slowly, improving under their masters, and that this progress, by judicious management, might and ought to be greatly accelerated. He argued, that as yet they were unfit to exercise all the privileges of citizens, and pleaded on their own account especially, for a reasonable delay; but urged that it should not be protracted beyond a certain defined limit, and that, in the interval, every means should be vigorously pursued, under imperative regulations, to enlighten and improve them. On behalf of the planters he appealed to the proverbial justice of Englishmen, and recalling the fact that the British Government had aided and encouraged them in acquiring their unjust property in slaves, he pleaded that, in common honesty, the mother country should be willing to bear her fair share of the pecuniary loss which the change would involve. And he sought to reconcile the planters themselves to the measure, by pointing out to them not only its justice, but necessity, and the rapid approach of the period when emancipation would be required, not only to satisfy the spirit of the age, but to secure their own pro-

sperity. To these subjects he added some considerations relative to the improvement of the free people of colour, the state of the foreign slave trade, and the commercial policy which ought to be pursued with respect to our West India possessions.

The cool and impartial character of these letters immediately attracted the attention of both parties, who read them with avidity. Nearly two hundred extra copies of the newspapers containing them were demanded for London alone, and the letters, copied into other prints, were soon spread in thousands over the Colonies. It is not to be supposed that his views were received with unmingled favour by either party. On the contrary, they were subjected to severe animadversions by both; but his facts had been very carefully and cautiously gathered from authentic sources, so as in no essential particular to be liable to dispute—his language was singularly temperate—his judgment, evidently unbiassed by enthusiastic theories on the one hand, or motives of self-interest on the other, was cool, dispassionate, and practical. Reasonable men, on both sides, saw that if the dispute was to be settled at all, it must be by some such measures as those which he recommended, and overtures were soon made to him to publish his "Letters" in the form of a pamphlet, which he did through a London bookseller.

The animadversions by which this production was assailed, only tended to confirm him in the soundness of his views. Those from the Colonies were more than neutralised by assurances from the same quarter that his "work was calculated to do more to approximate those whose sentiments were widely opposed, and to produce a friendly feeling, than any book upon

the same subject that had previously appeared." Those addressed to him by the friends of a more sweeping and immediate measure, he received with invariable good humour, and defended himself by remarking,—"What I wanted to effect, was a more friendly feeling among parties, and my object will account to you for the measured language in which I occasionally speak. I am very strongly impressed with the difficulties of the West India question, and with the dangers which hostility on both sides has produced. And I felt desirous to act as a mediator. Had I given greater vent than I have done to indignant feelings, I would have effectually ruined my cause, and, instead of doing good, might have run the risk of occasioning much harm. But though I have not said *all* that I think, I have said nothing but what I feel." Calm and judicious men, both in and out of Parliament, who had no personal interest in the question, in many instances congratulated him on the felicitous execution of this work. One example I give below, in an extract from a letter of Mr Home Drummond, well known as a philanthropic and remarkably judicious member of society, intimately associated with many good measures of public interest, both in Scotland and elsewhere. It is one among many examples of the favourable opinion formed by disinterested observers.

To Dr Duncan.

"London, Dec. 7, 1830.

"DEAR SIR,—I have had the satisfaction of reading your 'Letters on the West India Question.' I shall not be guilty of any delay in thanking you for the pleasure and instruction I have derived from the perusal. I have got so tired of the crimination and recrimination of the slave-owners and their anti-slavery opponents, that I have at times almost abjured the whole discussion. But your views agree more with my own

than anything I have ever read on the subject, and I think the publication of them must be very useful."

Useful indeed they certainly were. The first edition sold at once, and before the second could be well prepared for the press, the Slave Emanicipation Bill was already in progress. Nor can there be a doubt that this measure owed some of its most valuable features, and much of its success, to the judicious and well-timed views which he had by this publication submitted to the legislature, the country, and the colonies.

It was not long after the time to which these details refer, that Dr Duncan had an opportunity of showing his hearty interest in the African race, by the assistance he rendered in his own locality, and in Dumfries, to the promoters of the Free Negro Colony of Liberia —an establishment which, though pronounced by many to have originated in romantic and impracticable views, seemed to promise happy consequences, both to the emancipated Negro slaves who might be carried thither, and, by their influence, to the indigenous races of tropical Africa.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FAMILIAR CORRESPONDENCE.

I AM about now to introduce several letters of a domestic character, which are calculated to show, that though the design of this work has led me necessarily to confine the details chiefly to his exertions as a philanthropist, Dr Duncan's mind was not so engrossed by the pursuits of a secular benevolence as to neglect those still higher and more sacred subjects, which the sincere Christian must always feel to be of paramount importance.

The familiar correspondence in which he habitually indulged with his intimate friends, and with his children, in which business gave place to pious reflection, and the internal processes of his mind were communicated without much reserve, might easily be formed into a series illustrative of his progress in the life of faith. A few extracts from letters, written about the time at which we have now arrived, will throw light upon his Christian character, and will probably lead the reader to expect, not without reason, that the solemn considerations, connected with eternity and divine things, which already weighed so strongly on his mind, will come ere long to occupy a more pro-

minent place among his springs of action, so as at length to supersede, or at least to confine within their proper place, the less spiritual, though always benevolent objects which had hitherto so powerfully engaged his attention.

To his Daughter at school in Edinburgh.

Ruthwell, 11th January 1825.

My dearest B——, Your welcome letter came last night.

* * * * * * * * * * *

I feel anxious, my dear girl, to say something on the commencement of a new year, that may, by the Divine blessing, make a serious and salutary impression on your mind during the course of it; but I scarcely know how to begin, so many important subjects rush at once on my mind, all of them obvious and familiar, and therefore trite and commonplace, but all of them demanding the deepest and most unremitting attention.

The great difficulty, indeed, with which a Christian instructor has to contend is this very circumstance, that he can say nothing that is not already known—that is not already "familiar in the mouth as household words." If I were now to tell you, for the first time, that the years which are passing over your head, although they warn you, in unequivocal language, that you have here "no continuing place of abode," are only leading you, step by step, to a new state of existence; that your present life may be compared to that of a caterpillar, which is destined to go down for a time to the grave, and then to burst its cerements, that it may assume a new form of being, and, instead of grovelling in the dust, sip nectar from the opening breast of the tulip, and repose on the soft and perfumed leaves of the rose, and flutter through the balmy air on painted wings, and bask in the sunny meadow, inhaling sweets from every breath of summer; if, for the first time, in short, you were now to be informed that you are born for immortality, and had all the wonders laid before you of that gospel which brings life and immortality to light, what a strange and powerful impression would it make on your mind, compared with that which is now made by these truths, even in your most serious moments!

Try, my dear girl, to realise this to your imagination, and then think what is the nature of that information which would be poured all at once into your astonished mind. You have hitherto, we shall suppose, known only that you were allied to the beasts that perish, and that, in a few short years at the longest, the mysterious power which brought you into existence would dissolve your frame and mingle you with your parent earth. But the silence of nature is broken, and a voice comes to you from the unseen world. What is the message which it conveys? It tells you that there is a God who made and who governs innumerable worlds; that this eternal Being exercises his providential care not only over the most stupendous but over the very minutest of his works; that neither the immensity nor the smallness of the objects, to which he directs his attention, distracts or perplexes him; that, while he wheels the distant spheres in their destined courses, and presides over and directs all the grand and varied operations of the universe, he exercises the same regard, and employs the same fatherly care, towards yourself, as if you were the only being subject to his government, reading your thoughts, numbering the hairs of your head, and counting the beatings of your heart; and, what is more, causing all things to work together for your good, if you will only submit yourself to his paternal administration. What overwhelming information is this!

But new wonders are announced as you continue to listen to the heavenly voice. You are told, on the same undeniable authority, that there are other spiritual beings besides God, of various degrees of perfection and happiness; that there are numerous races of angels rising in continual gradations of power, of wisdom, and of goodness, and bearing a nearer and nearer resemblance to their Creator, without the possibility of ever becoming either equal or second to him; and that there are also various degrees of wicked and accursed spirits, descending deeper and deeper in the perdition of the bottomless pit. Thus your eyes are opened with amazement on the secrets of the invisible world; and whilst you are gazing, with feelings of awe and adoration, on this scene of unspeakable glory and unspeakable horror, it is all at once suggested to you that you too are an immortal spirit, which, although at present imprisoned in a feeble and corruptible body, will sooner or later burst into new life, and take your station for eternity among

one or other of these spiritual tribes. This leads you to inquire to which of them you are *naturally* allied; and you are told, to your ineffable dismay, that you belong to a *fallen* race, rebellious, accursed, and ruined; and that, if you receive the lot of your inheritance, "there remaineth for you nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." With fear and trembling you ask, "Am I, then, lost for ever? Are there no means of escape?" The answer is beyond all conception gracious—"God so loved the world that he sent his *only begotten Son*, that *whosoever believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life." Then follow all the wonders of Divine grace—the atonement, the intercession, and the final judgment.

And now can you avoid asking yourself the important and practical question—"If these things be so, what manner of person ought I to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" You perceive that you are now in the crisis of your existence, hanging, as it were, between heaven and hell, and naturally going downwards by your own weight; but assistance from above is placed within your reach; and if you will only stretch forth your hand to lay hold of it, you shall be borne up and carried on the wings of blessed angels into the presence of your God and Saviour in heaven!

What a motive to all that is holy, and excellent, and godlike! If we would enjoy the endless society of these celestial beings, we must become like them, cultivating their virtues and graces, and putting away from us all that corruption which causes us to bear so near a resemblance to the powers of darkness. This we cannot, indeed, do in our own strength, and therefore we must earnestly and assiduously apply to the teaching, and the aids, of Him who has said, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee—my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness. Prayer is the highest privilege of a human being: it brings us at once out of that natural state in which we are classed with fallen spirits, and introduces us into the society of the sons of God. It has been compared to Jacob's ladder, as it establishes an intercourse between heaven and earth, by which angels descend with blessings to the human race, and the children of Adam find a way of access into a more glorious paradise than that which they had previously forfeited. It is, indeed, astonishing that this unspeakable gift should be so little esteemed,

and the communion which it offers should be so seldom cultivated, or cultivated with so little ardour.

It would be easy, my dear B——, to go on at this rate for hours, and the employment would be any thing but irksome to myself; but I fear you will scarcely be satisfied in receiving a sermon instead of a letter, and sorry would I be were I to lose my purpose by wearying instead of edifying you. Besides, to tell you the truth, I have had all day a pain in my side, which the exertion of writing increases, and I ought, I believe, to stop and take some rest. It is only a rheumatic stitch, so it need give you no alarm. I will leave your mother to finish this; she is a better newsmonger than I am. Kiss my dear girls for me—God bless you all—prays your affectionate *uncle H.* I wrote a long and I fear *prosing* dissertation on Agnes's question the other day. Have you received it? In writing this I had you *all four* in view, my beloved girls, though I thought you, my *own* daughter, would expect to be particularly addressed.

To his Daughter, his Niece, and two Wards at school in Edinburgh.

Ruthwell, 2d Jan. 1826.

My dearest Girls,—I have no time at present to write you as I wish, being very much hurried indeed, but I cannot let the commencement of a New Year pass away without giving you my blessing.

I have always thought that custom, which does many ridiculous things, and shuts the eyes of the public to their absurdity, has been in one of her most preposterous humours, when she made the end of the year a period of thoughtless mirth and feasting. Why should that period, which so strikingly speaks to us of the fleeting nature of time, when the loveliness of the year has perished, and when its funeral knell is sounding, when we have advanced another stage on the journey we are taking to an eternal world, and when we are so forcibly reminded of the hours we have misspent, of the blessings we have abused, of the warnings we have neglected, and of the friends we have lost—why should this solemn and important period, so fruitful in lessons of wisdom, be wasted by us in thoughtless levity or sensual indulgences? It is surely passing strange, and looks to me something like a feast in a charnel-house.

I feel this the more this season on account of the numerous and striking deaths by which the expiring days of the year have been so remarkably attended. The suddenness of poor J. B—'s call—the peculiarity of Mrs S—'s character, and the helplessness of her husband, and the number of respectable families which other melancholy events have affected, have shed a gloom over the parish, which I have seldom seen so deep; and, to add to these, two heads of families well known among us were carried to their long home on the last day of the year —Wm. L. and A. B—'s wife. What striking warnings are these, my dear girls! O let us lay them to heart! They say to us in language which, if we have ears to hear, cannot but deeply affect us, "Arise," and be ready to "depart, for this is not your rest."

What a glorious thing it is to believe that there is another and a better world! If we were not assured of this, how "stale, flat, and unprofitable" would be all the "uses of *this* world." To have immortal souls—souls that are to be for ever improving in knowledge and in happiness, or going deeper and deeper into the abyss of sin and of wretchedness—how wonderful, and how interesting! How much do we owe to that Book of books by which these wonders are disclosed! How much more to Him of whom that book testifies! And yet, my dear girls, how wonderfully little do we think of these things, or lay them to heart! Let me entreat you to combat, with all your hearts, that deadness to spiritual things which characterises our fallen nature, and is its peculiar and remarkable defect. If you think for a moment soberly of the overwhelming magnitude of the interests you have at stake, and then turn your thoughts to the feebleness of the impression which they have hitherto made on your minds, you will be astonished at your own perverseness. And yet, it is not for the want of instruction and of warnings that we remain so careless. You, my dear B., in your own person, and you, my dear L., in a still more striking way, in the person of a beloved sister, have received extraordinary warnings to prepare for your great change. All of you have been spoken to as by a voice from heaven in the ordinances of religion, in your bibles, and even in the common events that are passing around you. Do not turn a deaf ear to the lessons of your heavenly father.

I trust you will take these hints as the advice of one who has

some experience both of the nature of earthly things, and of the deceitfulness of the human heart,—and not as the mere commonplaces of an uninterested declaimer. I know I am too little influenced by these considerations myself, and I deeply lament the coldness of my heart. God grant that yours may be more deeply affected than mine. Remember your Creator and Redeemer in the days of your youth, and so pious habits will grow with your growth, and strengthen with your strength, and you will find the yoke of religion easy, and its burden light.

I have just a single word more to add. I wish my dear girls would accustom themselves to religious conversation with each other. Officiously to obtrude your sentiments on others on this subject, would be quite out of place; but to stir up your own virtues and graces by frequent communications on serious subjects, is one of the most edifying and delightful exercises you can be employed in. There is frequently greater difficulty among young people—ay, and among old people too, in speaking on religious subjects, than on any other. Dress, amusement, the character, or appearance, or conduct of acquaintances, and such frivolities as these, are generally the sum total of conversation. These are subjects that, instead of improving, debase the mind—whereas serious conversation on the most important of all subjects, is at once interesting and ennobling. I should like to hear from you all on this subject—each in your own way, stating your difficulties, and asking questions as well as making observations. This will furnish me with texts, on which I shall not fail to comment. But I must conclude for the present. If I can snatch another half-hour for conversing with you, I will do it, but I go to Dumfries to-morrow, and this goes on Wednesday.

I am, my dearest girls, with the best compliments of the season, and my warmest prayers for all your household, from the oldest to the youngest, very affectionately yours,

HENRY DUNCAN.

To his second Son at Glasgow College.

Ruthwell, 18th Dec. 1826.

MY DEAR WALLACE,—You cannot imagine how much your mother and I are gratified with the account both you and

Oswald * give of your procedure, and especially the resolution you have so properly adopted, of having family worship every evening. This is a decisive step, which it requires both firmness and good principle to take, but of which I am quite sure you will never have cause to repent, if it was adopted from right motives, and is persevered in, in a right spirit. It is in this way, my dear lads, by going hand in hand in the path of duty, supporting each other as you advance, and cheering each other on, that you will acquire new alacrity and force in the race of Christian duty, and be able (through Divine assistance, on which I trust you always depend) to rise superior to the sneers of the worldly, and to hold on the even tenor of your way without wavering.

> "Of friendship's fairest fruits, the fruit most fair,
> Is virtue kindling at a rival fire,
> And emulously rapid in its race.
> O the soft enmity! endearing strife!
> This carries friendship to its noon-tide height,
> And gives the rivet of eternity!"

I have not so much time to write at present as I would otherwise have had, on account of a meeting of a committee of the parish about the vagrant poor. I enclose our resolutions, &c. to show you what we are doing. I am in hopes it will have some good result; but it depends on the unanimity with which we act.

I shall be glad if you can hear how the Gorbals Savings Bank is coming on. I have not time just now to seek out the address of the manager with whom I corresponded, but I think of writing to him. I am going to write again on Savings Banks and Friendly Societies, for a very extensive series of cheap publications, of which Mr Brougham is at the head.

Thank my dear Oswald for his very acceptable and excellent letter, which I have not time just now to answer, but which I shall not forget. With kindest wishes to you both, I am, my dear Wallace, most affectionately yours,

H. DUNCAN.

To his Daughter at School.

Ruthwell, 3d Dec. 1827.

I am glad, my dear girl, that you had an opportunity of

* His College friend and fellow-lodger.

gratifying your wish to partake of the Lord's Supper again, especially as it seems to have been attended with comfort and edification. Cherish the sentiments connected with such an approach, and pray that you may be enabled to reduce them to practice in your intercourse with the world. It is an observation not less true than common, that the best things are liable to abuse, and when abused, often become the greatest of snares. One abuse of the Sacrament is but too common—that of resting in it either as a meritorious act which atones for other defects and omissions in religious duty, or at least as a great devotional festival, which concentrates our piety, as it were, and renders it less necessary at other times. Now you are aware that it ought to be the very reverse. It is spiritual food to invigorate our pious affections, and give strength to our pious exertions,—it is spiritual discipline, to correct by self-examination and repentance the previous follies and sins of our hearts—it is spiritual instruction, to afford us higher and more distinct views of the great doctrines of the Gospel—and it is spiritual communion, to give us a foretaste of that more intimate and ennobling communion which we hope to enjoy for ever in heaven. In all these particulars it is expressly opposed to those fallacious views, which, instead of an incitement, tend to render it a substitute for active piety. You should think of it frequently in these lights, that it may be the means of inspiring you at once with vigour, alacrity, and encouragement, in the path of duty.

CHAPTER XIX.

RECOLLECTIONS OF RUTHWELL MANSE AT THIS PERIOD—SKETCHES OF DR DUNCAN.

THE following extracts I gladly insert from a communication by one who had ample opportunities of studying Dr Duncan's character, and witnessing his every-day life in the midst of his family. It refers to the period at which this narrative has arrived, and will serve to throw some illustrative light upon what has been already written.

"A native of a parish adjacent to Ruthwell, I heard much about Dr Duncan from my boyhood, and early formed an exalted idea of his character. As far back as my early recollections extend, he filled a large space in the public eye of the south of Scotland, and stood prominent among all his brethren, not only as a talented clergyman, but as an enlightened and public-spirited man. Before I knew the meaning of benevolence, I heard of his active and original methods of promoting the interests of his parishioners, and seeking the good of his country.

"I can remember hearing people say of young men who wanted a friend or patron to help them to a situation, or push them on in the world, that if they could

get Dr Duncan of Ruthwell to take them by the hand, success would be sure to attend them. I may also mention that a similar good name attached to his amiable and gentle partner, whose kindliness of feeling, and strong good sense, and charity to the poor, endeared her to all the country round.

"The first time I saw Dr Duncan was on the occasion of a masonic festival in the town of Annan, where he preached to a large assembly of free-masons and others in the parish church. As a boyish spectator, rather than an intelligent hearer, I mingled with the audience; but I was soon arrested by the fine personal appearance, the elegant language, and the affectionate delivery of the preacher. His text was, 'Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.' I can recall nothing of the sermon but its general impression, which remained with me after other sermons I heard at that period were forgotten. Indeed, the text, the sermon, and the preacher, were in a manner fixed upon my heart and memory, and formed together an era in my youth.

"I can well remember when I was first introduced to Dr Duncan, and had the privilege of conversing with him. The natural gentleness and unassuming dignity of his manners, at once won my respect, and put me at my ease. I could feel little diffidence in his company, though I had cause to be diffident enough. The subject of conversation was the improved, or what has been called *the intellectual*, system of teaching. He spoke as upon a favourite topic, and like one who knew the philosophy of education. I had been in Edinburgh, and had visited the Sessional School, then in the zenith of its fame. He spoke of that seminary as realising views he had long cherished, and done his

best to recommend. I had already known, though I knew better afterwards, that the author of 'The Cottage Fireside,' was one of the first to advocate a more sensible and philosophical way of managing and teaching the young. Its lessons on education are the most valuable portion of that pleasing and useful little book.

"In the summer of 1829 I went to reside under Dr Duncan's roof, and from that period a friendship, I may say an intimacy, began, which death, I trust, has only suspended. Thenceforth I had every opportunity of judging of the character and inner life of one, whom from my boyhood I had learned to venerate.

"Both for internal and external attractions, few Scottish manses could compete with that of Ruthwell. The genius of its benevolent and accomplished master was felt and seen within and without its walls.

"When I first saw the manse and its premises, its lawns adorned and sheltered with trees, its numerous gravel walks gracefully winding and skilfully prolonged, its pond or artificial lake, reflecting a white rustic bridge, and many living flowering ornaments on its borders; its garden, or rather series of gardens, divided from each other by tall, thick beech hedges, with the garden-house, composed of slabs of red sandstone, that had served to rectify some scientific errors of the day, and made no small sensation in the geological world; and a Runic monument, almost unequalled in Britain, and the delight of northern antiquaries; I could hardly credit the accounts I received of the former uninteresting condition of the place and its neighbourhood.

"The society at the manse was of a very varied description, embracing almost a constant succession of guests throughout the year. A more hospitable roof

could not be found. It was at Ruthwell Manse, I think in the summer of 1831, that I first met with Dr Chalmers. He was on his return from London, and was in high health and spirits, having not only enjoyed the opportunity of giving expression to his favourite philanthropic views before the senators of the day, but also having visited many of his English friends, and made numerous pleasant journeys over a great part of England. I was profoundly struck with the affability, the beaming benignity, the geniality of mind and manner, of that great man. The friendship between Dr Chalmers and Dr Duncan was most cordial on both sides. A community of views and feelings on most topics, civil and ecclesiastical, and a common benevolence that longed for the elevation of the lower classes of society, bound them together as friends and fellow-churchmen by the strongest ties. Dr Duncan's love and admiration of his illustrious friend were unbounded; and I have heard Dr Chalmers say that it was an honour to the Church of Scotland that she numbered among her ministers the originator of Savings Banks.

"I have often thought that the description of a month, a week, or even of a single day at Ruthwell Manse, about the time that I speak of, would present a most interesting specimen of Dr Duncan's spirit and character, and an excellent *section* of Scottish clerical life. The society, the conversation, the employments of the day, the books read or discussed in the evening, were of a superior stamp, and indicated the philosopher, the philanthropist, the Christian minister, and the man of letters. At prayers in the morning, after reading the chapter, he usually addressed a few affectionate words, or appropriate questions, to the young gentle-

men who resided with him, who were always, I may say literally, treated as children of the family. He sometimes also read a paper from 'Sturm's Reflections,' that he might introduce in a becoming manner the *works*, along with the word of God. It was, I believe, in connexion with this practice, that the idea first arose in his mind, which he afterwards admirably carried out in his 'Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons.' His forenoons were usually devoted to study, if indeed some poor parishioners soliciting advice or assistance, or some Savings Bank depositors, coming to increase or diminish their store, left him the necessary leisure. At mid-day he received visiters, walked with his guests, or performed parochial duties at a distance. A public meeting in Dumfries, a meeting of the Presbytery in Annan, or some communion engagement in a neighbouring parish, would frequently take the Pastor from his home for the day; and I can well remember the joy with which the rattle of his returning phaeton was hailed by the different members of his household, and, among the rest, the boys would start to their feet to welcome 'Uncle Henry.'

"I cannot help speaking of his skilful hand; indeed, a hand more skilful and versatile I never saw. His feats of manual and artistic dexterity were numberless and amazing. What is called a *mechanical turn* is not uncommon; but he had something much higher than an accomplishment of that kind. His was not merely the ingenuity which delights to construct or mend a child's toy, repair a domestic disaster, or make as good as new some out-of-door implement—all such feats he easily could and did perform, with rare delight to himself, and to the great satisfaction of others. But he possessed in a remarkable degree that fineness of eye,

and power of hand, which characterise the artist. He made exquisite models and figures in clay, was an excellent draughtsman, and had a fine appreciation of the beauties of painting. Numerous plaster-of-Paris casts, and elaborate models of the Runic monument, all executed with the nicest skill and precision, attested the vigour of that *constructiveness* which was one of his leading characteristics. After being deprived by advancing years of several of his teeth, by the loss of which his utterance was somewhat affected, and having been disappointed by professional unskilfulness, he even became his own dentist,* and succeeded to his perfect satisfaction again and again in this self-taught profession.

"I have alluded to the tasteful grounds and gardens with which he surrounded the manse. The improvement of these was his favourite amusement. The alteration of a road, the giving of a new bend to a walk, the thinning of a clump or belt of trees, the lopping off a few branches from the favourite ornaments of the lawn, or the transplantation of a few shrubs, or flowers, was to him a prized relaxation, and was always directed with characteristic taste and skill. In executing all such operations he had a ready agent in his worthy and faithful old gardener, James Veitch, a man who had a great deal of poetry and feeling in his composition, and loved his master with no common love, entered into all his tastes, and zealously executed his orders. He also clung to him in days of trial

* His first experiment in dentistry was made after losing a tooth one Sabbath morning, as he was preparing to leave home for Dumfries, where he was to preach, when, finding that he had thus been deprived of the power of intelligible utterance, he on the instant formed a substitute of *cork*, so covering it with white wax as to baffle observation.

when many proved faithless. He died in his service; and never did master more honour a faithful old servant.

Dr Duncan's ministerial character, when I first knew him, was daily deepening in earnestness and power. His labours for the highest welfare of his people had begun to become more spiritual and more abundant than they once were; and it was only what might have been expected, immediately before and after Disruption times, while the love of some of his brethren was waxing cold, his only grew warmer; and that, while others halted in their work, his labours became more numerous and blessed than ever. In visiting the sick, attending to the wants of the poor, and ministering generally to the temporal and spiritual necessities of his people, he was the faithful, tender-hearted, and anxious pastor. He himself felt and confessed many deficiencies, but I continually saw the strongest proofs of his fidelity. His pulpit ministrations, if not eminently popular, were replete with earnestness and fervour; his doctrine was strictly evangelical; his delivery was always affectionate, often animated and impressive; his whole style and manner were eminently unaffected. The literary merit of his discourses was always high. Nothing could exceed the lucid order of the arrangement and the flowing beauty of the language. So excellent his taste, so great his talent for composition, that any thing awkward or inelegant never dropped from his lips or pen.

"His scientific attainments were of no common order, as his writings show. I never knew any unprofessional man of science who had a better acquaintance with the different kingdoms and general system of nature. He had a decided turn for natural history; was versed in

the general principles, and, to a certain extent, in the minute details, of geology; and always cherished an enthusiastic love for astronomy. He could read the constellations of the starry heavens with the eye of a practical astronomer, and delighted to expatiate on the glories of the material universe. Of the sublime and the beautiful in nature he had a deep and lively perception, his natural sensibility being quickened by pious feeling and intellectual refinement. The splendour of a starry night, a grand or lovely landscape, or the sublime phenomena of a thunder-storm, would often affect him to tears. I never saw such deep and lively emotion in any lover of nature. It was a general belief in the parish and neighbourhood that the minister of Ruthwell delighted in a thunder-storm; and, while others were filled with terror, he was wont to exclaim, as the thunder rolled overhead, 'How glorious!'

"Dr Duncan's correspondents were of all classes, and would range from the Lord Chancellor of England to the humble native of Ruthwell who had gone to push his fortune in another part of the country. The same pen that one night wrote learned letters to high personages on Scottish ecclesiastical law and church politics, would probably next be engaged in advocating the cause, or directing the conduct, of some former parishioner. No young man setting out in life, or wife or widow inquiring after husband or son in a distant land—no person, in short, who could appeal to his benevolent nature, ever applied to him in vain. At the expense of many a tedious correspondence, and many a sum of money lent, or given, he conducted the business, or pleaded the cause of the widow, the orphan, the deserving, and the friendless. I often

thought that his benevolence peculiarly delighted in literary efforts of this kind. He was certainly most ardent and untiring with the pen; and, I need scarcely say, with the purse too. The matchless facility and elegance with which he wrote letters of every description, was one of his most remarkable accomplishments, and often struck those near him with amazement. After being wearied perhaps with the business of the day, he would often throw off, at a sitting, letters, no matter on how delicate or difficult subjects, that were perfect models of expression."

The concluding portion of this communication, relating to an event which spread gloom and sorrow over the parish and district, as well as the manse, is reserved for a later chapter, to which it more properly belongs.

CHAPTER XX.

MODERATISM—PATRONAGE—LETTER TO HENRY BROUGHAM, ESQ., M.P.

If we find it impossible to ascertain the occasion when Dr Duncan first received the Holy Spirit's converting influences, we can, at least, humbly point, in these later days, to many marks from which we derive the happy assurance that ere now he had "passed from death unto life." We are henceforth to find him chiefly occupied in public with the cares of the Church, and at home with the spiritual interests of his flock, while his correspondence, his exertions, and his testimony to the truth, sealed at length by the renunciation of all that the world holds dear, show the importance and completeness of the change which he had undergone.

Progress was one of the chief features in his history —steady and uninterrupted if not rapid—and this, which will be more fully illustrated in a future chapter, was remarkably manifest in his views of church policy. Attached by family ties and early associations to the *Moderate* party, he seems to have acquiesced for several years, at the commencement of his ministry, in the measures of the majority. In

1806, however, an important question had come to occupy the General Assembly, of which he was a member, and, unfettered by prejudice, he ventured to think differently from the leaders whom he had been accustomed to follow. Being met at the door of the Assembly Hall by Dr Hill, on the day previous to the discussion, he was politely invited by him to join a party of the clergy at breakfast, next morning, at his house. He felt embarrassed for a moment, and fearing to commit himself by accepting a civility, which might be meant only for *staunch voters*, he candidly stated, that, though it would give him pleasure to avail himself of his attention, he had formed an opinion on the question different from Dr Hill's, and would find it his duty to vote accordingly. The doctor looked first astonished, and then displeased, as if he had neither expected nor could tolerate this independence. He did not repeat the invitation; but, with an abrupt "good-morning!" broke up the interview. He used often to say that this incident first drew his attention to the presumptuous authority which party leaders often assert and their followers submit to; and that he had now resolved never again to subject himself to the yoke which he seemed to have been unconsciously wearing, and which, to his comfort, had by this incident been at once revealed and broken.

From this time he saw less and less reason to admire the policy of the prevailing majority; and though ever ready to support good measures, by whomsoever proposed, he seldom found that his own views coincided with theirs. He accordingly voted steadily in the faithful minority in most of the questions of his day; on that of missions, for example, he invariably advocated the Church's duty to carry the gospel to the

heathen; and in like manner he unhesitatingly joined in the firm protest raised against the old abuse of pluralities. On these and kindred subjects he seldom gave a silent vote. He vigorously moved reforming overtures in his presbytery and synod, supported the same views in the public prints, and was never backward in maintaining his principles on the platform.

The progress of Evangelical sentiments at length became manifest in the Assembly, where the Moderate majority, under the more enlightened leadership of Dr Inglis, were induced to concede the principle of the Church's missionary obligations to the heathen; and, not much later, a decided opinion expressed by the royal commissioners appointed to visit the Scottish Universities, set at rest the question of pluralities. So that some years previous to their acquiring a majority in the Assembly, the party with which he sympathised found their hands free to resume with vigour their long-neglected warfare against the ancient abuse of *Patronage*.

The Church, in her best days, had always regarded this as a yoke and a burden. It had been imposed in 1711 by the British Parliament, for the express purpose of making the way more easy for the accession of a Popish government, and in direct contravention of the Treaty of Union. For sixty successive years the General Assembly had continued to protest against the grievance; and if of late the Church seemed to have felt the yoke easy, or to have even forgotten it, this was but a symptom of her dangerous lethargy, and she had evidently become oblivious of many other matters equally important. The time had now arrived when her faithful sons must revive the old watchword of freedom, and take up the protest of their fathers.

Among those who held this to be a duty, there were two shades of opinion, represented by what were afterwards distinguished as the Anti-Patronage and the Non-Intrusion sections of the Evangelical or Orthodox party. To the former of these belonged Dr Andrew Thomson, whose able and hearty leadership gave weight to proposals which many were disposed to regard as chimerical and impracticable, while others, though equally opposed to old abuses, feared them as revolutionary and dangerous. The latter claimed Dr Chalmers and a host of good men, who were willing to accept a measure of substantial relief from the tyrannical abuse of patronage, by securely providing that congregations should not be overborne by the intrusion of unacceptable presentees. This less extreme section, to which Dr Duncan acknowledged his attachment, believed that the worst evils of patronage might be obviated without the repeal of any civil statute—simply by a more faithful and liberal policy on the part of the Church Courts; and that, were patrons made to perceive that the Church felt her responsibility in resisting the unwarrantable stretch of their patrimonial rights, parties would soon come to a better understanding, and the evils so justly complained of would be practically obviated, even better than might be expected, were the rough hand of the British legislature invoked to make any organic change in the civil relations of the Church.

These anticipations seemed to be favoured by several circumstances. The people still enjoyed the right of Call, and the power of the Church Courts to adjudicate upon their call had not as yet been disputed. Nay, cases could be quoted in which the Court of Session had formally recognised this power, and in

disputed settlements had contented themselves with awards, embracing only the secularities, expressly reserving the spiritual authority of the Church Courts in the induction of presentees, and acknowledging that with these matters the civil judges "*had nothing to do.*" This doctrine was accordingly almost, if not altogether, unanimously held both by the clergy and laity of both parties in the Church of Scotland, and seemed indisputable. Then there was this encouraging fact, that the reforming party had been steadily increasing in the Church since the beginning of the century, and already gave hopeful symptoms of being soon in a condition to send up a majority to vote in the Assembly. And besides all this, the advance which society in general seemed to be making in liberality of sentiment, and the tendency to amelioration which appeared to pervade the world, encouraged the hope that a *bonâ fide* effort, on the part of the Church, to improve her own procedure, would be met by parties out of doors in a spirit of candour and of approval.

Dr Duncan cherished these sentiments with the sanguine earnestness which marked his character, and rejoiced in an opportunity which was afforded to him, so early as 1827, of bringing them very fully before the government of the day. It was in this year that several of the Whig leaders, and among these the Marquis of Lansdowne, and Mr Brougham, M.P., were called to office as ministers of the crown. In the month of October he received a letter from Mr Brougham, expressing regret that "unlucky accidents" had prevented their meeting, "which," he adds, "is increased by the reflection, that there are some subjects of discussion which it is really very essential we should come to an understanding upon, especially

Kirk-patronage, because it is necessary to put the government in a right train; and I had reckoned upon Dr Andrew Thomson and us having it all talked over at Brougham Hall. I must now beg you to prevail on him to put his ideas in writing, and do the same yourself, as our chance of meeting at Christmas is too small to justify delay."

Dr Duncan lost no time in acceding to this request. He took the opportunity of making a very full and explicit statement of the Church's condition, claims, and obligations, and pointed out what he believed to be the duties of the government, as follows:—

To Henry Brougham, Esq. M.P.

Ruthwell, 24th October 1827.

My dear Sir,—As circumstances have disappointed me of the personal interview, with the prospect of which I had flattered myself, I now sit down, in compliance with your request, to reduce to writing my thoughts on the present state of our Scottish ecclesiastical establishment, and on the manner in which government might best promote its interests, and those of religion, in this part of the United Kingdom. This is a subject to which you very justly attach great importance, and it is so incalculably superior to any local or party interest, that I am sensible I should be guilty of a great dereliction of duty, were I not, in treating it, to divest myself of every feeling except an anxious desire for the general good.

In a political point of view, our Presbyterian church, you are aware, exhibits features essentially different from those of the Episcopal establishment of the sister kingdoms. In England, the Reformation having been carried on under sanction of the crown, was modified by its influence, and in subserviency to its views the secular power of the Pope was transferred to the sovereign. In this country, on the contrary, the Reformation was opposed, feebly indeed, but zealously, by the throne, and was the result of an irresistible impulse on the part of the people, whose popular and gifted leaders gave it the impress of

their own minds, rendered sensitive, perhaps, by the opposition of their rulers. Hence have arisen some fundamental differences between the religions established in the two divisions of the island, one of which particularly affects the status of this northern church: I allude to the principle—to maintain which our forefathers struggled so nobly and so successfully—that the Church has no human head, and that the ecclesiastical power ought in no respects, but in matters purely civil, to be in subjection to the secular.

Although time and events have greatly softened down the feelings connected with this principle, it is no dead letter, but still remains an essential axiom of our church principles, which it behoves every politician to have in his mind, and a neglect of which has, even in these days, been productive of mischief. I need only remind you of the ferment recently occasioned in Scotland by the political blunder committed during the unhappy dispute about the late Queen Caroline, in the proclamation prescribing to us a particular form of prayer for the Royal Family. This proclamation was universally condemned in Scotland, and almost universally disobeyed, on the high principle that the throne was assuming a power which did not belong to it, in a matter which was justly held to be purely ecclesiastical. . . . . Government could not do anything more grateful to our Scottish population—so far as the Church is concerned—than by showing a scrupulous regard to this principle.

The most extensive influence which the government exercises in matters connected with our Church, is by means of the patronage the crown possesses in the livings of the clergy. The right of presentation to more than a *third part* of the parishes of Scotland is vested in the crown. The manner, however, in which that right has hitherto been exercised, I must be permitted to say, has had a tendency to degrade the clergy, and to alienate the minds of a people peculiarly alive to every thing connected with religion.

There are two circumstances in particular which have operated to produce this effect—the one, a deeply-rooted prejudice in the minds of the higher ranks that much fanaticism is inherent in the religion of the people, which it is their duty to counteract by the exercise of their church patronage, or of their influence in appointing ministers, which is often consider-

able—even where the patronage is not vested in themselves; and the other, the unhappy practice of employing church patronage as the means of strengthening political influence.

We need not transcribe the paragraphs in which this last remark is illustrated. He shows that a great proportion of the nobility and gentry had become, or were becoming attached, to the Episcopal form of Christianity — that being the religion of the Court, and therefore *fashionable;* that in sacred subjects they had thus lost their sympathy with the other classes, who, in religion, were universally well informed and intelligent; that the appointment of ministers by the aristocracy was frequently made without any regard to the wishes of the people, and even in opposition to them—while the latter, on the other hand, either learnt to sit down listlessly, under such ministers as were imposed on them, and to become indifferent to religion altogether; or were induced to fly off in disgust from the Established Church, and to swell the lists of dissenters—of the two, by far the more desirable alternative. He deprecates the practice, hitherto generally followed by the Crown, of placing its patronage at the disposal of Members of Parliament, the obvious evils of which needed but little illustration. He then rapidly glances at the *history* of patronage, and though to Scottish readers of the present day the subject may appear sufficiently trite, we shall insert the passage for the information of others, and as tending to explain some portions of the succeeding narrative.

Our reformers, finding the right of patronage established, did not think it necessary to abolish it, but in their hands it underwent an important modification. The patron still retained the right of presenting *a qualified person;* but the church courts

were constituted the sole judges of the presentee's qualifications, which gave them the power of rejecting him, and of thus nullifying the presentation. Acting under this power, the Church required an invitation (or call, as it is technically named) from the congregation, and held this to be essential to the validity of the presentee's claim. During the prevalence of Episcopacy this right was in abeyance; but the Revolution, which re-established Presbytery, restored it, and made another very essential alteration, by vesting the patronage in the heritors (being Protestants) and elders of the several parishes. Under this arrangement, a call by the congregation was still considered necessary; but if they refused to call, they were bound to assign reasons, which were to be judged of by the Presbytery, who consequently, by sustaining these, might reject the presentee.

The right of patronage, however, did not long remain with the heritors and elders. In the reign of Queen Anne the Jacobites had influence enough to get that right restored to its original possessors, by an act passed in direct opposition to the wishes both of the Church and of the people, and in contravention of the Revolution Settlement and Treaty of Union—to which act may be traced the growth of so large a body of dissenters, professing the same faith and form of worship with the Establishment, and differing from it almost solely on the subject of patronage. But this measure did not withdraw the right of a congregation to give or withhold *a call.* Still it rested entirely with the church courts to render this popular privilege efficacious or nugatory; and after a long struggle between the two parties in the Church, known by the names of *Popular* and *Moderate,* the views of the latter prevailed, and the right to call, though still retained *in form,* has been (since the days of Dr Robertson the historian, who led that party) rendered a dead letter by the impolitic rigidity and discreditable obsequiousness with which the General Assembly of the Church has sustained presentations, even in cases in which the parishioners were universally dissatisfied.

A knowledge of these facts seems useful in directing government to the most salutary method of exercising the right of crown patronage, in conformity with the spirit of our ecclesiastical constitution. It appears advisable that government should repair the injury done by their predecessors, by gratify-

ing the people in some shape with their much valued and really important privilege of *a Call*, which in its original form just amounted to *a Veto*. But the inquiry comes to be, how this is to be done in the most beneficial manner, without trenching on the present practice of our church courts; for I will not now inquire how far it may be proper to stir the question of the call in these courts, as this is not a matter in which government could properly interfere. Whatever may eventually be done by the Church in this matter, I do not hesitate to anticipate the most salutary consequences were the crown to act up to the spirit of our ecclesiastical law regarding the call, though they might not be able to follow out its letter.

In doing this, however, it would be necessary to guard against extremes on either side. If, on the one hand, government were to place the choice avowedly in the free suffrages of the people, without any restriction or control, caballing and animosities might be the result; and, on the other hand, were the application of the heritors alone to be attended to, it would be impossible to prevent the hurtful interference of county or burgh politics, or of some paltry private interest or narrow prejudice. Some middle course therefore would approve itself most to my judgment, especially as it would approach nearest to the system adopted in the purest times of our Church. Among a variety of plans which may be suggested, I shall not at present venture to name any, as I see none entirely free from difficulties. Perhaps it would be better for government, in the meantime, to feel their way cautiously, without adopting any precise system, but with a determined resolution to act *bonâ fide* for the best interests of the people, and with a paternal consideration of their wishes, leaving each particular case to be determined by circumstances. There would be no difficulty in obtaining the necessary information for determining the choice of the candidates in every case, and a practice would result, which might probably work better than if the ministry were to commit themselves by acting at first on a specific plan. I certainly have formed an opinion respecting the mode which might be most expedient, but I would rather see it come gradually out as the effect of experience, than have it laid formally down as an avowed rule. I may, however, just mention, that particular deference will naturally fall to be paid to such

heritors as reside in the parish, and as attend the parish church; but that even their wishes should not be followed, except where they should accord with the opinion of the more respectable members of the congregation, and especially with the views of the elders, who are generally the organs of the public voice. I have no doubt that any plan calculated to ensure efficient and acceptable ministers in crown livings, and prevent the ruinous effects of political jobbing, in a matter at once so sacred and so important, will be hailed by the friends of religion in Scotland, as an advantage of no common magnitude, not merely on account of its direct effects on the parishes thus favoured, but scarcely less on account of the indirect influence which the enlightened conduct of government must produce *on other patrons*, and indeed on the whole affairs of the Church.

Turning from the subject of patronage, another matter of high importance suggests itself—I mean the exercise of government influence in our great Ecclesiastical Council. You are aware that the partial and exclusive policy of former administrations has been evinced by their conduct in this as well as in other respects. In the capacity of lay elders, the agents of government have supported, not the general interests of religion, but the narrow and selfish views of a mere ecclesiastical junto. They have thus excited and perpetuated party distinctions and animosities, and have done much to lower the character of our General Assembly in the eyes of the people. Were the present administration merely to change sides, and to adopt, in favour of the opposite party, that partial mode of acting of which their predecessors have set them the example, they would do indeed what would certainly be more acceptable to the great body of the people; but there would be a partiality in this, too nearly resembling the erroneous management of our former rulers. If in any case it is good for the sovereign to exercise a paternal government, it is peculiarly so in his conduct towards the Church; and it is distressing to see those who ought to assume for him this dignified and becoming attitude, so miserably lowering the character and mistaking the best interests of the crown, as to render him the abetter of a party.

This will appear still more inexcusable when we advert to the fact, that the different sides which are taken in ecclesiastical affairs by no means imply any peculiar views with regard to civil government. Many of what is called the popular party

in the Church, were among the staunchest supporters of the late administration, and that, too, notwithstanding the marked neglect, and even hostility, with which they were treated as members of church courts. The truth is, that the line of conduct adopted by the popular party, as to the affairs of the Church, is dictated by a zeal for the spiritual, not the civil, interests of the community, and by a desire to resist the secularising principles to which they conceive there is a tendency in their opponents. It is easy to see that whatever bearings this may indirectly have on civil liberty—and these are by no means unimportant—it has nothing to do, necessarily and directly, with the distinction of parties in the state; and, in point of fact, our ecclesiastical parties are not amalgamated with those of Parliament, except in so far as the absurd preference given by former administrations to a particular junto, has had an influence in producing this effect, by giving rise to an undue subserviency, in that junto, to the ruling party. It must be confessed, however, that it is not easy to meddle at all with the transactions of the General Assembly without taking a side, or at least without being accused of doing so; and most certainly the idea which has gone abroad, that the decisions of our great Ecclesiastical Council are influenced by political considerations, has done much to hurt its credit and undermine its authority. In every point of view, therefore, the policy which prudence, and a regard to the constitutional rights, as well as to the prepossessions of our Church, appear to point out to government, is just *that we should be let alone.*

There are very few questions in which our ecclesiastical jurisdiction, in any material degree, interferes with the civil; and where the two jurisdictions may seem to clash, the matter may be much more satisfactorily settled by private and friendly conference with influential individuals, than by arraying one party against another. I have no doubt that if government should adopt this suggestion, the good feeling indicated by their forbearance would be duly appreciated by the public; and the advantageous contrast in which they would stand with their predecessors—not even excepting Mr Fox's administration—would bring them a far greater accession of moral strength than the most judicious management of parties.

There are some other subjects which strike me as of very great importance, with reference to the religious and moral

interests of Scotland, which, as they would require to be discussed at considerable length, I can do no more at present than barely mention. One of these is the want of church accommodation, which is becoming every day greater, on account of the rapid increase of our population. Something has already been done in the Highlands to remedy this growing evil, and something has also been proposed on a limited scale for the Lowlands. But nothing less than a great national measure will be adequate to our wants. It is not so much new chapels as new parishes and parish churches that we stand in need of. Were government to intimate their willingness to afford relief to the community in this respect, they would be eagerly met by the Church; and a mass of information would soon be laid before them, which would make out a very strong and urgent case.

I am anxious also to call your attention, and that of Lord Lansdowne, to the present state of Scottish education, which is greatly deteriorated in every part of the country, owing to the inadequate provision made for the parochial teachers; and I could have wished, too, to have said something on the great impropriety of imposing secular duties on the clergy, which in several instances has been inadvertently done by Acts of Parliament, but I must here close at present.

* * * * *

And am, my dear sir, &c.

HENRY DUNCAN.

Mr Brougham acknowledged receipt of this letter by return of post, and expressed his "unmixed satisfaction" with the exposition which it contained. He added, also, that he had already forwarded it to Lord Lansdowne, now Home Secretary, that he might "carefully peruse and study it while in the country."

It may be here observed, that this was probably the first occasion in which *the Call* had been pointed to as possessing distinctly, in its fair and proper exercise, the character of *a Veto*. This view of the people's privilege had long dwelt on Dr Duncan's mind; and when the Church, in 1831, had come to be more ripe for re-asserting the wholesome principles of her ancient

polity, he took occasion to illustrate his opinions on this subject, in a letter similar to the above, and, in some passages, identical with it, addressed to Lord Melbourne, who was now Home Secretary, and published in the *Christian Instructor;* and somewhat later he addressed Lord Lansdowne in similar terms, in consequence of a request for information on the part of his lordship. His views seemed to many to offer a prospect of reconciling conflicting interests, and securing the substantial rights of the people, without disturbing the existing relations of Church and State. Even his Anti-Patronage friends began to express themselves as not unwilling to postpone, if not to waive, their more extensive demands in favour of a measure which already began to appear attainable, and which, if it united in common councils all true-hearted lovers of the Church's purity, they acknowledged would deserve their support.

CHAPTER XXI.

DEATH OF MRS DUNCAN—ABORTIVE EFFORTS—PROPOSALS RELATIVE TO CROWN PATRONAGE—THE VETO.

WHILE the question was lingering at this stage of its progress, an event occurred which arrested Dr Duncan in his public efforts, and cast himself and his family into the depths of an overwhelming affliction. I shall introduce the subject in the words of the friend to whom I am indebted for the long communication in Chapter XIX.

"The few years (1829-1832) which I spent at Ruthwell Manse, were among the calmest and happiest of Dr Duncan's life. Most of his friends and relatives, his own cotemporaries, were living; he had suffered few family trials or bereavements, and many precious ties were yet unbroken. But at length one great affliction came, which filled his house, and all the country round, with mourning. This was the death of Mrs Duncan, in January 1832. I had seen my honoured and revered friend, holding on, calm and undisturbed, in the even tenor of his way, in the midst of domestic peace, and of public usefulness. I was now to see him, whom prosperity, so far as I could judge, had not elated, plunged in affliction of the

deepest kind. Mrs Duncan's health had long been delicate and uncertain, but in general she was able to attend to the manifold affairs of her establishment. A severe influenza, an epidemic at the time, after attacking several members of the family, at last laid hold of her weakened frame. This was at the beginning of the week—the *Communion week* also—always a solemn time in a religious family in Scotland. For several days no danger was apprehended. But the *Fast-day* came, and she was still weaker; then the Saturday, another 'preaching day,' and she was weaker still. The medical man was anxious, but yet no great alarm existed in the family. As the evening advanced, however, the beloved invalid grew much worse. The solemn and touching midnight scene that followed, I did not witness. Early next morning I was awakened by the mournful announcement that Mrs Duncan was no more. Thus suddenly the shadow of death had fallen on that happy home. Repressing, as far as I could, my own deep sorrow, I went down stairs, concerned chiefly about those on whom this sad stroke had especially descended. Never shall I forget the suppressed and composed agony visible in the aspect of my bereaved friend. He shook me convulsively by the hand, but could not speak. Then, as if strength were lent him for the purpose, he engaged in family worship. Calmly and sweetly, without a groan or tear, he read the 103d Psalm; after pronouncing with deep and tender emphasis the final words, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul,' he poured forth his heart in earnest, affectionate prayer, which seemed to give him much relief. This was on the Communion morning, when already from far and near the people were beginning to move towards the sanctuary, ignorant of what

God had sent upon their beloved pastor. In that pastor's house all was solemn and still; the voice of weeping was not heard, but the tears of resignation flowed silently. An only daughter shared her father's sorrow, and his fortitude. Greatly were both upheld by Christian faith and hope.*

"But the Lord's Supper was to be administered, and the solemn service of the day must begin in a few hours. What a change in the minister's home since the last Sabbath, when he had most affectionately addressed the words of life to his congregation! A messenger was dispatched for a neighbouring minister, with a request that he would undertake the necessary duty. He appeared in due time; and in circumstances that filled every heart with sorrow, began the service. As he prayed earnestly for the afflicted pastor, the whole congregation were deeply and visibly affected. Many wept, and all wore the aspect of deep emotion. Before the peculiar service of the day was begun, the pastor himself, calm and composed, as specially strengthened by his Heavenly Father, slowly entered the church, and seated himself in the midst of his mourning people. There he sat, sorely stricken and afflicted; but the hand that had smitten bore him up, and kept his heart from sinking. As he rose, took my arm, and composedly proceeded to the communion table, where, sitting down, he leaned upon the bosom of a sympathizing Saviour, and poured the anguish of his soul into the ear of the Man of Sorrows, I beheld, with a feeling of awe and gratitude, the

* His sons were absent on the clerical duties of the parishes in which they respectively laboured, but hastened, as soon as the melancholy news reached them, to mingle their tears with those of their father and sister.

sacredness of Christian grief, and the strength of Christian resignation."

This event, the first overwhelming sorrow which he had ever known, was borne with the fortitude and resignation of a Christian. To most of his friends he had composure enough to write immediately communicating the painful tidings at considerable length. The following has been extracted from a letter to an amiable young friend in Jamaica, who had for many years of his boyhood lived under his roof.

To James Campbell, Esq. M.D., Kingston.

Ruthwell, 27th Feb. 1832.

MY DEAREST JAMES,—

* * * *

It was the eve of our winter communion,—Mr T—— of D—— was kind enough to take the duty of the Action sermon and other services,—I was myself enabled to be present a great part of the time, and to derive comfort from the solemn and consolatory exercises of a communion table. Though it appeared at the time some aggravation of the afflictive dispensation, that the blow was struck at such a time, I had reason to perceive in it the hand of a merciful Father, who knows infinitely better than we do what is good for us. I was in some degree *taken out of myself* by the necessity of exertion, and the opportunity of having at once recourse to the most endearing of all our religious duties, proved the means, in the hand of Providence, of strengthening my fortitude, and bringing me directly to the true source of all consolation. Your dear "Aunt Henry" had looked forward with much satisfaction to the approaching opportunity of joining with her fellow-Christians, in again devoting herself to the service of her Redeemer, at his table on earth; and she more than once expressed disappointment, that her illness would be the means of excluding her from this privilege. She little thought that while I was supporting my faith and patience by contemplating their outward symbols, and feeding on the shadow, she would be enjoying the substantial reality at a celestial table where Christ himself personally presides. It was the conviction that this was

her glorious employment, which enabled me to contemplate her empty seat without a sigh; and it is this conviction which still supports me.

I have few particulars to send you of her deathbed. On Friday morning she told me with an indication of great satisfaction, that during the course of the preceding night she had been able to compose her thoughts for a considerable time to serious reflection, which the pressure of sickness had previously prevented. This, and some observations about the approaching Sacrament, were all the religious communications which I have to record. Though sensible to the last, she was unable to speak for some time, and did not seem to be aware of her approaching change to a world of blessedness. But I can dwell no more on this subject, and shall only add, that the composure with which I was so mercifully enabled to endure the first severity of the blow, has never deserted me. Yesterday I preached for the first time. It was a great exertion, especially as I tasked myself to preach the sermon, which I had prepared during your "Aunt's" illness, and which contained some things most painfully appropriate. But I got through the duty fully as well as I expected.

The influence of this season was, as might have been expected in a growing Christian, not only solemnizing, but sanctifying; and, after its stunning effects were over, it sent him forth on all his enterprizes with redoubled energy in the cause of his Master and the Church. He had, indeed, lost the friend whose counsel and co-operation helped to make life sweet and duty pleasant. His people, too, had been made, by the event, a family of mourners; but this one sentiment seemed to be predominant in his mind over all the rest—"I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh in which no man can work." Even his over-burdened heart sought relief in exertion and activity, and the public controversies of the Church, and the private duties of the parish, besides that variety of other sub-

jects with which he was habitually engaged, became to him more engrossing than ever. We must not linger, therefore, in the house of mourning.

Among the class of objects last mentioned, we may, in passing, allude to several which, at this period, pressed very strongly on his attention. One of these was the proposed erection of a University at Dumfries, by means of funds left at the disposal of an excellent and public-spirited lady of the County, who had heartily embraced the scheme. This measure was at one time in a most hopeful train; and Dr Duncan, who with his brother Dr T. T. Duncan, had at first suggested it, was employed for several years in conducting a voluminous correspondence on the subject. At one time it was proposed to transfer the University of St Andrews, at another, one of those of Aberdeen to Dumfries, and thus to secure the benefit of an existing charter. The principal public men connected with Scotland were consulted, and seemed generally to be inclined in favour of some such arrangement. Lord Brougham, now occupying the woolsack, entered eagerly into the proposal. Even those local and party difficulties, which might have been expected to be most insurmountable, had been in a great measure obviated; and a scheme was actually drawn out for the constitution of the future College, under the most favourable auspices. This fair prospect, however, was, in a moment, dissipated by the assurance received from the highest authority, that an opposition, far too powerful to be resisted, was preparing on the part of the English Universities, which, having already protested against the conferring of University privileges on the London college, would press the matter before the Privy Council, with a perfect certainty of

success. Relinquishing, with much disappointment, this long-cherished scheme, but still entertaining a desire to promote the interests of education, the lady alluded to, next turned her attention to the existing Universities, and proposed to establish a certain number of bursaries and fellowships, and to make other munificent benefactions. In all the negotiations connected with these schemes, Dr Duncan was constantly consulted, and would have gladly been of service. But, notwithstanding every exertion, and the most flattering prospects, they ended in nothing.

Another measure, which also ultimately came to nought, after a considerable expenditure on Dr Duncan's part both of energy and money, was the attempted establishment of a religious newspaper in Dumfries. Though still a proprietor of the *Courier*, he made the purchase of his old rival the *Journal*, which by this time had become quite effête; and resuming his old functions as editor for some months, till a suitable person could be found to take this post, he strove to raise the character of that print and to change its tone. In this attempt he was abundantly successful. His religious articles were singularly attractive and improving, while the general style of the paper gave complete satisfaction to that portion of the public who could relish his more serious method of treating the topics of the day. The effort, however, in a mercantile point of view, did not succeed. Either the worn-out character of the paper, the name of which he did not alter, or the paucity of readers capable of appreciating its new excellencies, or both of these combined, rendered it necessary, after a year's trial, to relinquish the undertaking.

A third subject which now engrossed his attention,

was the revival of a scheme instituted by him in 1826 for the suppression of vagrancy. Nothing had proved more impracticable, and the evil was both palpable and grievous. By a register kept during six months, no fewer than 1180 mendicants visited the parish in that short space of time, among whom there were 804 adults, and of these 443 in the vigour of life, and 468 capable of labour—in fact, sturdy beggars. The demoralizing influence of such a system of mendicity is obvious. The constant succession of ignorant, unprincipled, and abandoned characters, pouring over the face of the country, in search of a precarious subsistence from public bounty, was felt to be fraught with contamination. Low, vulgar, and profligate manners, were thus diffused,—the lazy saw constantly before them a tempting example of successful idleness, and the worthless, polluted by the contact of persons more worthless than themselves, learnt to throw off the restraints of well regulated society, and to give themselves up to the most loose and degrading practices. To be conscious of the existence of an evil in his parish was, with Dr Duncan, to desire and strive after its removal. He called together the heads of families, and proposed to them an entire revolution in the system of dealing with vagrants. His plan was to appoint a trustworthy person to dispense the charity of the parish, in money, to a sufficient amount for the purchase of a single meal for each applicant, or, after nightfall, to furnish a ticket entitling the bearer to a night's lodging. The tenants were to decline their universal practice of serving vagrants at the door, and were instead, to contribute to the expense of the new scheme, one halfpenny per pound of rent, respectively. The measure promised to check the temptations to

vagrancy, as well as to prove, on the whole, economical to the contributors. The parishioners, generally, entered into his views, and the scheme was fairly tried during half-a-year; but it was found that the want of co-operation in neighbouring parishes, the tendency on the part of the inhabitants, especially the softer sex, to return to their former habits of indiscriminate charity, and the objection on the part of such to be burdened by a double expense, made it necessary to relinquish the attempt, reluctantly indeed, and not until an unsuccessful effort had been made to unite all the parishes of the synod, securing also the aid of the civil authorities, in a combined system of operations—nor until a vigorous correspondence on the subject with the gentlemen of the neighbouring Stewartry, through John H. Maxwell, Esq., their convener, had also, to his great disappointment, ended in nothing.

But we must return from these abortive, though engrossing efforts, to the narrative of more successful exertions. From the time when the publication of his letters to Lord Melbourne drew attention to the Call, not only as possessing the valuable features of a check, but as capable of being administered by the Church in the specific form of a wholesome *Veto* on an arbitrary exercise of patronage, the subject was generally discussed and canvassed, both in private circles and in the inferior courts of the Church; so that when, at an after period, the Assembly found it necessary to take a step in legislation, the Church was well prepared for the enactment of a measure which had been long contemplated and maturely weighed.

In preparing the way for this very important measure, Dr Duncan had not failed to improve his advantages. An opportunity of expressing his principles and views,

in the quarter where it was most important that no misunderstanding should exist, was afforded him in October 1832, soon after Lord Brougham's elevation to the woolsack, by a request from that nobleman that he would draw up a statement of his own "ideas of the best way to make the Crown Patronage in Scotland available for checking the clamour against the Establishment;" or, in other words, for restoring the Establishment to the affections of the people of Scotland. In the letter, conveying this request, his lordship refers to a conversation which he had had with Dr Duncan, a short time before, at his seat in Westmoreland, in which he had fully expounded the Non-Intrusion principle, and had suggested it as of vast importance, that the crown should give a prominent and high-minded example to other patrons in the disposal of its presentations.

To this request he replied by return; and next day more deliberately and at greater length. He began his second letter by describing the parties from whom the clamour proceeded, the most important and influential of which were the Dissenters, of whose history and principles he drew a short and lucid sketch, demonstrating that Patronage was the grievance which drove them out of the Establishment, and gave a popular sanction to their murmurs against it. He then proceeded to give an historical account of Patronage in Scotland, and of the people's right of Call, following the same line of illustration as in the letter so largely quoted above.* He laid down the great principles of Non-Intrusion and Spiritual Independence, from which he drew the conclusion that Government

* See Chapter XX.

should adopt for their rule such a modification as circumstances might require, of the principle established at the Revolution settlement. This, it will be remembered, vested the right of nomination to a benefice in the heritors of the parish, being Protestants, and the elders. His more detailed proposal was, that the heritors, being members of the Established Church, along with the elders in parishes of which the patronage is vested in the crown, should be called upon to meet within a certain period after a vacancy, and nominate *one*, or, should they prefer it, *two* qualified persons, whom they would recommend to the crown as candidates for the presentation: That thereupon a presentation should be issued to one of these persons, the validity of which should be made to depend on the *Call* being afterwards duly subscribed by a majority of heads of families, being communicants of at least three years' standing, and attending church on the day of the moderation of the call: That the Crown should, however, still reserve to itself the right, on the rejection by the people of two successive presentees thus offered them, peremptorily to nominate a third, whose induction should not be barred by the absence of a Call without other tangible and sufficient reasons.

He explained and illustrated the probable working of such a scheme at some length, and thus concluded:

"I may add, that I anticipate, from such a rule being followed by the Crown, the happiest effects on private patrons. They would, I am persuaded, very soon find it necessary to follow in the same track; and even should the church courts abstain from making any new regulations, the practice of the Crown would soon become almost universal. I should think, under these circumstances, an Act of Parliament would be unnecessary—at least till the working of such a system should have been fairly tried."

To many this proposal will not appear a very extravagant one. But the entire renunciation of an *absolute* right of patronage, which it involved, even Lord Brougham was not prepared to recommend to the Crown. In his reply he begged of Dr Duncan a reconsideration of the whole subject, and the suggestion, if possible, of a mode of dealing with this delicate question, presenting a *less extreme* aspect.

The temperate view which he had always taken of the rights of parties, left him considerable latitude; and when he thus found that the ground he had assumed was too high to suit the taste of men in power, he had no difficulty in proposing a measure, which, while it would accomplish substantially all the good that was desired, might prove less alarming, and might even possibly conciliate them. Accordingly, in his next letter, he takes an entirely different view of the subject, and recurring to the principle of the *Veto*, which he had already suggested, proposes in substance its recognition and establishment, in a form very similar to that afterwards adopted by the Church.

To the Right Hon. Lord Brougham and Vaux.

Ruthwell, 5th Dec. 1832.

My dear Lord,—

* * * * * *

What would your Lordship think of this plan? Let the Crown, before issuing the presentation, send down to the Presbytery, through the medium of the Moderator or Clerk, the name of a candidate whom they mean to present to the living, provided he is not disapproved of by the parishioners, requesting them to intimate this resolution from the pulpit, and to call a meeting for public worship, (as is done in moderating in a call), on a *week*-day, within a month from the time of inti-

mation—at which meeting the parishioners shall, after sermon, be invited to *approve or disapprove* of the nominee. If no disapprobation is expressed, let that be held as a virtual approbation; but should opposition exist, let the votes of all the heritors, elders, and heads of families then present, who have been communicants for at least three years, be immediately taken. Let the result be stated in the Presbytery's minute, simply, and *without assigning any reasons*, and let a copy of this minute be transmitted to government, on which they shall act.

* * * * * *

This correspondence shows, that he had, like most of those with whom he acted, no love for patronage, even in its milder forms; for could he have induced the Government to renounce even its initiative into the hands of parties having a more direct and immediate interest, he would have preferred it; but when this was impossible, his alternative—the Veto—came as a favourable substitute, which, if not the best conceivable measure, was at least likely to obviate many of the worst grievances of patronage. His hopes were not altogether realized in the future disposal of the crown livings, though it would be unjust to deny that an increasing desire was manifested on the part of Government to listen to the reasonable wishes of parishes in the appointment of their ministers; a circumstance to which, under God, we trace the steady advance in the zeal, energy, and efficiency of a large proportion of the younger clergy. This doubtless helped to prepare the way for those measures of internal improvement soon adopted by the Church, but repudiated by the legal tribunals and the State; and led by a series of providential and wonderful steps, to the momentous crisis, commonly known in our later history as the "Disruption of the Church of Scotland."

CHAPTER XXII.

VETO LAW PASSED—URR CASE—EXCEPTIONS CONFIRM THE RULE.

THE Veto law was enacted by the General Assembly in May 1834. Not doubting that the Ecclesiastical Courts had a power, by their scriptural constitution, ratified and acknowledged by the State, to enforce this enactment, the Church hoped thus by a permanent regulation, binding on all presbyteries, to mitigate the rigours of Queen Anne's law. In prompting this movement, as we have seen, Dr Duncan had been greatly instrumental; and in bringing it to its consummation, he had also taken his full share. The records of his presbytery and synod, bear testimony to the zeal and constancy with which he urged his views upon his brethren; while in the General Assembly, of which he was very frequently a member, he did not fail to range himself with the increasing band who, after a lengthened struggle, and formidable debates, at last accomplished the object which had so long occupied their close and anxious attention.

We need not enter minutely on the Special Regulations of an act which was so soon destined to become inoperative; but it is only justice to state, that during the few years in which its provisions were, to some

extent, recognized, the happiest effects had begun to be experienced; while such uneasy movements as took place on the part of patrons, on the one hand, and parishes on the other, may with justice be traced to the unwillingness of the former to allow it a trial, and to the inexperience and ignorance of the latter as to the extent of their powers under the act. Had the rights of the Church in the enactment of that law been admitted, both parties would soon have understood the relative position in which it had placed them, and the best and most harmonious consequences would have followed. Such consequences, indeed, were anticipated by intelligent observers, and even in Parliament the Veto Law was noticed with general approbation. Lord Brougham took a favourable opportunity, a few weeks after its passing, to express his opinion in these terms, as recorded in the Mirror of Parliament:—

My Lords, I hold in my hand a great number of petitions from a most respectable portion of Her Majesty's subjects in the northern parts of this island—all referring to one subject—I mean Church patronage in Scotland, which has greatly and powerfully interested the people of Scotland for many months past, and respecting the expediency of some change in which, there is hardly any difference of opinion among them. The late proceedings in the General Assembly *have done more to facilitate the adoption of measures which shall set that important question at rest, upon a footing advantageous to the community, and that shall be safe and beneficial to the Establishment, and in every respect desirable, than any other course that could have been taken;* for it would have been premature if the legislature had adopted any measure without the acquiescence of that important body, as no good could have resulted from it. I am glad that the wisdom of the General Assembly has been directed to this subject, and *that the result of its deliberations has been those important resolutions which were passed at the last meeting.*

Notwithstanding such flattering opinions as the one here expressed by Lord Brougham, it is not to be denied, that like many other popular measures, this law was liable to abuse. The extravagant expectations cherished among the people, by demagogues, to whom the recent passing of the Reform Bill had given influence, rendered it probable from the first, that cases would arise in which unfortunate collisions might be expected between the patrons and the people. In one of these the family of Dr Duncan was nearly concerned. His second son, who had a short time before received license from the presbytery of Annan, was presented in 1835 by the Crown to the parish of Urr. He had never as yet preached in the parish, and was altogether unknown by the people; but their choice had been pretty equally divided between two other candidates, and the living was presented to him, in the hope that the union of both parties would thus be secured. The government at this time was that of Sir Robert Peel, on no member of which had Dr Duncan any claim, either of interest or friendship, and the appointment arose from certificates of Mr Wallace Duncan's personal character, seconded by the fact that a parish in which he lately acted as assistant, had unanimously petitioned the patron to continue him as their pastor. The people of Urr, however, without waiting to make any inquiry regarding his qualifications, or even to hear him preach, and flattering themselves that the new law might be so worked as to place the unrestrained power of electing their pastor in their own hands, resolutely organized an opposition to his induction, some of them declaring openly that they

would reject the Apostle Paul himself if presented by a patron.

Accordingly when he appeared in the parish, to preach by the Presbytery's appointment, he found prevailing among the body of the people a determination to refuse him a fair hearing; and though he was warmly and heartily received by a large proportion of the parishioners, when the call came to be moderated in, the Veto was exercised by an *apparent* majority of five, and the presbytery accordingly rejected him.

But this attempt, if successful, threatened to counteract the object of the Veto law altogether, and to convert a salutary arrangement into a source of hostility between patron and people. Stimulated more by this fear of the perversion of the law, which might, if not checked, result in rivetting the fetters of patronage, than by any private considerations, and urged by the advice of many friends interested in the fate of the general measure, Dr Duncan counselled his son to persevere. This course appeared advisable, also, from the fact that he was heartily supported and encouraged generally by the well educated and well informed portion of the parish. He appealed, therefore, from the decision of the presbytery to the higher church court, with a view to prove a combination of the people for the purpose of defeating the presentation, irrespective of his merits, and also to try the validity of the alleged majority, which, on a principle strictly accordant with the spirit of the enactment, was liable to question.

The case, while it hung in suspense, which it did for several months, was one severely trying to Dr Duncan's feelings. Immediately after it had reached

this stage, he wrote to a friend in the following terms, under date 29th August, 1835:—

Wallace will personally inform you as to the proceedings at Urr, and the manner in which we are all behaving under this very severe trial, and therefore I shall only add, that the result, though certainly not anticipated, was not very surprising to me, and that I bore the announcements made by W. himself, on Friday morning, before breakfast, with philosophical calmness, after passing a restless and somewhat feverish night, on the rack of suspense. I could not help recalling to myself that passage of David's life, in which he spent the time of his child's illness, in fasting and deep dejection; but as soon as the child expired, threw off all marks of sorrow, and appeared in public as if nothing had happened. I know nothing more trying to the mind than suspense. Ah! if we had not our support in the invisible hand which overrules all events, how much more insupportable would such a trial be! But I feel that I am but a faithless and unconfiding creature, and that my most needful prayer is, "Lord increase my faith—help thou mine unbelief."

Again, and again, he was tempted by the aspect of the affair, and the extreme dislike he cherished of seeming unduly to urge the interests of one of his own family, to advise the relinquishment of the contest; but he was as often brought back to the conclusion, that such a decision, in the circumstances, would be pusillanimous, and might have a dangerous tendency with reference to the public interests of the Church.

To one friend, who was inclined to advise a retirement from the field, he wrote:—

As can have no doubt that the whole opposition is factious, and not one of principle, and is in direct violation of the spirit of the Assembly's enactment, I am very unwilling, on public grounds, to give an easy triumph to the agitators. I think that the success—especially the *easy* success of this conspiracy—will go far to injure the Church in its dearest interests, and to prove the utter failure of a law which I have done so much to establish. It seems of importance, therefore, that the

whole system of agitation should be developed and exposed, which could not be done were Wallace now to give up. . . I might add another reason—the anxious wishes of those who are attached to his cause—did I not fear that there may be as much of party spirit as of principle in that anxiety. I have seen a letter, however, from one of W's friends in the parish, to one of my parishioners, which evinces *heart*, as well as the spirit of party, and which says that many, both men and women, shed tears, when they heard that they were likely to lose him. These will probably come forward with a petition to the church courts in W's favour, and a petition perhaps to himself, entreating him to persevere.

These latter anticipations were fully realized. The numerous friends whom the presentee had secured in Urr, clung to him with sincere attachment, and petitioned both the synod and himself. But in the meantime, Providence opened up a path of honourable retirement from a contest which, whatever its immediate result, had promised no permanent satisfaction to himself. The parish of Cleish, in which he had officiated for a short time as assistant, became vacant. The parishioners presented a unanimous and cordial petition to Mr Young the patron, who resided in the parish, praying that Mr W. Duncan should be appointed to the charge, and in a few days he received the presentation.

In the new sphere which was thus opened to him, Mr W. Duncan felt that, should he accept it, he would have many encouragements. Though removed to a distance from his early home, and from paternal counsels, he was not in a land of strangers. The parish lay next to that of Kinross, in which a near and valued relation, Dr Craig Buchanan, had for many years laboured as a minister of the Church of Scotland, and whose affectionate willingness to aid him in every good work, he knew was equal to his experience. A complete

unanimity pervaded the parish, and a hearty welcome awaited him in every household. Besides, so evident an interposition on the part of Providence, left no choice—and it was with heartfelt gratitude that Dr Duncan now acceded to his son's desire to give up the appeals still pending in the case of Urr.*

In some minds, the occurrence of a case like this would have had a very discouraging, if not an irritating effect. It was not so with Dr Duncan. He acknowledged that the Veto law had operated differently from what he expected, in this, and several other similar cases; but, much as he lamented such occurrences, he never regarded them otherwise than as exceptions. He did not on their account, therefore, conceive a disgust at the law itself, nor desire to take away from the people a boon, which a portion of them had not chosen to use temperately or constitutionally. On the contrary, while he saw their errors, he made due allowance for their inexperience, and their natural liability to be misled by evil counsellors; and the only desire expressed by him in consequence, was to have their powers more accurately and intelligibly defined. In this spirit he adhered firmly to the rights of the people, and did not for a day hesitate in maintaining the principle, which by the Veto law had been so clearly affirmed.

* It is proper to state that the succeeding presentee had to pass through a similar ordeal, the *vetoing* party having been, by a system of agitation, kept together, and induced to exercise their privilege again on the former grounds. The apparent majority in both cases was nearly the same, but the presentee's appeal to the Supreme Court of the Church was sustained, and his right to induction confirmed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROGRESS ILLUSTRATED—STATE OF THE PARISH AT THIS PERIOD.

We have seen that the earlier periods of Dr Duncan's clerical life were but imperfectly marked with the tokens of an evangelistic ministry. His sermons, certainly, possessed in taste and elegance what they wanted in *unction;* but judging from the remains of these early productions which may still be examined, we are constrained to acknowledge, that, for some years after his ordination, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity had held but a subordinate place, instead of their due pre-eminence, in his pulpit addresses.

In 1803 he had been called to preach before the Lord High Commissioner, at the General Assembly. Mrs Dugald Stewart, the lady of his old professor, addressed to him a note on the occasion, in which she says, "It is impossible for me to express how happy we have been made by the accounts on all hands of your splendid appearance on Sunday last. It does not *surprise* Mr Stewart, but it makes him truly happy." This testimony must have been sufficiently flattering, but it is easy to understand, how in a *moderate* age, he might have made what would be generally

esteemed a "splendid appearance," and yet have failed to convey the simple, but soul-healing, news of mercy to lost souls, through a crucified Saviour.

He loved, at this period, to expatiate on the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, in his glorious works—to urge his hearers to rise, "from Nature, up to Nature's God,"—and to enforce the duties of devotion, of obedience, and of resignation, by considerations like these, rather than to dwell on the love of Christ, the sanctifying power of the Spirit, and the obligation of loving Him who, in his atonement, so marvellously has demonstrated his love to us. When he appealed to Scripture, it was but too frequently without seeming to appreciate its real character as a message of reconciliation from God to rebel man.

We have seen that, so early as 1804, his views had received a new direction, and his sermons, from that time, there can be no doubt, partook less of the savour of elegant, but cold moral sentiment, the spirit of which he appears to have insensibly imbibed in Liverpool, and which neither tests nor universities had succeeded in dislodging. From that period, to the day of his death, the most remarkable feature in his history, as a Christian minister, and which is discernible in all departments of his character and works, is *the steadiness and gradual acceleration of his spiritual progress.* In his preaching this was very apparent. Disquisitions on Natural Theology, Virtue, and Morality, first began to yield to discourses more directly founded on Scripture. Sentiment gave place to truth; at length, evangelical doctrine, illustration, and appeal, came to take the prominence which poetry and fancy had once usurped; and, in the end, the affectionate and fervent

spirit of a Christian pastor, yearning over lost souls, was apparent in every address he uttered.

This progress I have described as gradual. I may add, that at first it was extremely slow. Many years elapsed before he seemed to grasp the awful importance of the charge laid upon him, or to view his relation to his people as closer than that of a friend, whose part it was to be benevolent and watchful indeed, but whose chief duty consisted in promoting their temporal welfare, respectability, and happiness.

This remark receives a striking illustration from the methods by which he thought himself warranted on many occasions to *show his interest in them*. It may not appear so strange to those who lived in Scotland thirty or forty years ago, as it must to such as have known that country only during the last ten, to be told that the minister of Ruthwell, in common with many of his own profession, for years gave his ready sanction to "charity balls" and "charity theatricals;" nay, that with characteristic energy and interest he took upon him many of the arrangements connected with these rural gaieties. Truth, however, requires us to state that such was the case; and he has been known, when the necessities of the poor called for a special effort, even personally to superintend the mechanical and scenic preparations of the village theatre, and to prepare the piece to be represented—nay, to attend at and regulate the rehearsals. One of his objects, in all this, no doubt, was to repress and discountenance any thing that might arise of an evil tendency; nor does it seem to have once occurred to him, till long after, that these exhibitions enclosed the germ of many evils against which the Christian minister is bound to wage a war

of extermination. As his views gradually brightened, the dangers he had thus trifled with were disclosed to him; and then he not only withdrew his countenance from such proceedings, but, in the honest and frank spirit which he had always manifested, took a favourable opportunity of acknowledging the change, and of deprecating measures which, at an earlier period, he had freely sanctioned.

In his pastoral work a similar progress was manifest. From the first we have seen him engaging, with becoming energy, in the usual and prescriptive labours of his office; nor did his numerous excursive avocations in the fields of benevolence and philanthropy ever materially interfere with these. All classes of his parishioners had learnt, in their perplexities, to come for counsel and assistance to the Manse, and even the more intelligent and independent of his flock frequently found the value of such a friend. Many instances crowd on the memory, which, however, must be withheld for want of space. Nor were these benevolent and kind-hearted exertions by any means strictly confined to the circle of his own parish, and yet Ruthwell was "the apple of his eye." Within that territory every name was familiar, and his heart warmed as he looked abroad over its farms and cottages. "Now, a cheer for old Ruthwell!" he would say to his children, in driving homewards with them, as they passed the well-known boundary of the parish. Within that limit he was at home, and a friendly smile and cheerful word greeted all he met. Perhaps some aged pilgrim, tottering onwards with unsteady step, would be invited to a vacant seat beside him, or some youngster, distinguished by his Sabbath school proficiency, would be indulged with the envied privilege of *a ride.*

Every one he saw or addressed was to him an object of interest and affection, and so closely entwined with his heart were Ruthwell and its people, that repeated and flattering offers of interest, to procure his removal to a richer living and a wider sphere, were unhesitatingly declined. And yet even in walks of benevolence and love, so congenial to the pastoral office, the same progress was manifest. His earlier efforts were, in a great measure, confined to the temporal interests of his people—those of a later date largely embraced, what he came to recognise as, the infinitely more important concerns of eternity. Never ceasing to promote their outward comfort and welfare, he bent his more devoted energies at last mainly to the saving of their souls.

Some of the steps in this progress were sufficiently visible to all who knew him. The writer well remembers, for example, a period when a marked change took place in the method and extent of the family devotions, arising, unquestionably, from a growing appreciation of these exercises. His sermons, at another time, were observed by his people to become, month by month, more earnest and more edifying. The familiar conversations of the domestic circle also would partake of this increased spirituality, and his pastoral visits would be noticed as savouring more and more of another world. This advance quickened as he grew older. For years before his death every new event of importance which arose seemed to afford a new starting post, from which he set forth, with manifestly improved alacrity, in the race of Christian devotion. His was truly "the path of the just, which is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

About the period at which we have now arrived,

the parish had reached a high degree of *cultivation*, if we may employ the word. During a course of years his own advance was indicated by the increasing energy with which his pastoral work was prosecuted, and the new schemes by which his love to souls was developed—the *experiments*, so to speak, by which he strove to discover the most favourable means of impressing their hearts and awakening their consciences. He had for some time held, with growing frequency, what may be called *extraordinary* meetings for devotion, sometimes on Sabbath evenings in the Society room or parish schoolhouse, or in the schoolhouse which had been erected, as related above, in a distant corner by the *surplus fund* of the parish bank—sometimes on the evenings of working days, either there or in the private dwellings of his parishioners. His Sabbath-school instruction, formerly confined to the Church, and of course only attended by the children of the neighbourhood, was now diffused over no fewer than six localities, all of which, in turn, with the aid of members or inmates of his own family, he personally superintended, his object being to bring the benefits of the institution to every child in the parish. An infant-school was opened in 1832 in the village, and a teacher engaged chiefly at his own expense, the superintendence of which he committed to the willing care of his daughter. He was peculiarly attached to the young, and sedulously watched over them as they approached the verge of manhood, to train them in the principles of truth, and guard them from the dangers and temptations to which they were apt to be exposed. Classes for such youths were held for long periods, every season, on two evenings of each week. There he appeared among them more as a friend and fellow-

learner than a master. For them he employed some of his leisure hours in preparing models and transparencies, meant to illustrate Jewish manners or scriptural scenery; and when they were drawn together, he invited and encouraged the familiar remark and the free enquiry, gladly striving, by every means, to engage their attention and awaken their interest. The Sabbath-school teachers, also, who were generally of this class, gathering from every district of the parish, held at the Manse a monthly meeting for mutual improvement, at which he presided, and in which each of the young men, in turn, was encouraged to lead the devotions.

To his classes in preparation for the communion he paid very anxious attention, and he early introduced a practice which he followed to the end of his ministry, of requiring all catechumens to make a profession of their faith before the congregation. These classes were larger or smaller according to circumstances, and at times he used to regret that, for several days at their first opening, the attendance was discouraging. On one of these occasions, which the writer remembers, a single youth arrived at the appointed hour. This was intimated to Dr Duncan, when some one present remarked, that it was a pity he should take the trouble of meeting with but one. "Don't call it trouble," was his reply, "we must make a beginning. John shall not be sent away because he comes alone." It was among the young accordingly, as might be expected, that when the day of trial came a large proportion of his most devoted friends and followers were found. In short, no efforts which ingenuity, stimulated by a love for souls, could prompt, were omitted. Every family had become more than ever his peculiar

care, and now he seemed to be realising, but in a higher sense than he was once capable of imagining, the early anticipated position of a father and universal friend to the people of his charge.

And yet, if the question be asked, What was the fruit of these labours? we are constrained to reply, that for a long season this was sought for in vain,—"Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" was the mournful question which he had for years again and again to repeat, without receiving any satisfactory reply. Apathy, unconcern, and spiritual death, seemed to brood over the district, and tokens for good, though not altogether withheld, were comparatively few. Under these circumstances, it could not have been the cordiality with which the truth was hailed, that made him love his people so much, for his was in too many cases rather the unquenchable affection of a father to his children, which survives, if it cannot be blind to their wilful and cold-hearted indifference. This, however, thank God, was neither universal nor perpetual. Some there were, during all the years of his converted ministry, who valued his message, and amply rewarded his care; and, towards the later period of his life, on which we have now entered, their number increased, and their influence extended. Ruthwell Christians may, at this moment, be reckoned both in England and America,—some, living monuments of divine grace, and of his faithfulness—others, who though dead, yet speak. Two aged persons, who had continued comparatively insensible for eighty years, gave at last the precious tokens of a new life; one of these, it may be interesting to mention, was William ——, whose name occurs in a very different connexion at p. 50. Many of the young of

both sexes are still following the Saviour, I trust, faithfully. From Canada, intelligence sometimes reaches their friends of those who received at his lips a message they continue to value, and which they are even earnest in spreading; and in several of the larger towns of England little companies of his spiritual children may be found, who, it is hoped, are lifting up the banner of truth amid prevailing darkness. It was pleasing to be thus assured, that, notwithstanding his many fears and anxieties on this subject, he had not been labouring altogether in vain, or spending his strength for nought, and that the gloom which sometimes filled his heart, as he contemplated his perishing flock, too little impressed and interested by his message, was far from being unrelieved by better and brighter tokens.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MARY LUNDIE — CORRESPONDENCE — HIS SECOND MARRIAGE — SACRED PHILOSOPHY OF THE SEASONS — HIS MODERATORSHIP.

In the month of July, 1836, his second son, who had by this time become minister of Cleish, was united to Mary Lundie,* eldest daughter of his long-loved friend. From her infancy he had felt the warmest interest in his future daughter-in-law, whose precocious talents, and singular loveliness of character, had from the first won his admiration and affection. Several letters, written to her before her marriage, throw some pleasing lights upon his character, a few extracts from which are therefore introduced.

To Miss Lundie.

My dearest Mary,— Ruthwell, 5th Feb. 1835.

* * * * *

I was truly pleased with your "Orphan's stay." † The additional anecdotes you have introduced, entirely do away my hypercritical objections to it, as you read it to me in MS., and now, I trust, it is not mere paternal partiality for the author, which induces me to consider it the *ornament* of the beautiful volume which contains it. I was deeply affected with the

* The Memoir of Mary Lundie Duncan, published by her mother soon after her lamented death in 1840, is probably well known to most of my readers.

† A narrative, published by the Rev. Mr Ellis, in his Missionary Annual.

truth and force of your mother's interesting contribution, * but it withered rather than revived me—scorched rather than melted me. It went too searchingly into the very bottom of my wound, and, although there was a healing balm in her other hand, I had not recovered the smart when the paper closed. This was not her fault, but the publisher's, who gave only the introduction, of what I do not doubt was a story worthy of such a commencement, and this is saying much—as much indeed as I can well say for any thing of the kind. Your simple and melancholy tale called tears more than once into my eyes; but this is a much more equivocal compliment from me, than it would be from most men; for I am unfortunately, as you too well know, not only not "unused to the melting mood," but that mood comes upon me, at times and seasons when no one else would be affected, and people of ordinary nerve are totally at a loss to account for it; while, at other times, these very persons would overflow with tenderness, while my heart remained as hard as the nether millstone. You cannot think what annoyance the weakness I am complaining of has frequently been to me—how often, both in the pulpit and in private, my lips have been sealed, from a fear of losing self-command, when a word or two, expressive of my feelings, might have been useful and becoming—and how often an unexpected and overpowering burst of agitation has shown my weakness, to the astonishment, and, I fear, sometimes to the scorn of my hearers. I have never been able effectually to account for or analyze this source of annoyance—of which I am any thing but vain. It is a cause of frequent humiliation, and does not (as exhibited in me) deserve even the equivocal name of an amiable weakness.

I do not know how I got into this egotistical strain. I intended to speak only of you and your interesting tale, and behold I have filled the last two pages with nothing but myself. Well, I must just plead guilty, and call another subject as fast as I can.

B—— and I—— are going on nicely with their Classes and Infant School, and I do trust are doing good. You will, I am sure, be delighted to join them in their benevolent labours, and they will probably be benefited by the experience you may have picked up in the metropolis,—at all events, as "iron sharpeneth

* "The Widow," in the same publication.

iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend," and not less, I am sure, may that be true of a *woman*. Sympathetic intercourse is at once the solace, the support, and the stimulus of the heart. I know not what the present is worth without it. It is sad to wither alone in a blighted and desolate world. Need I say how affectionately I am, your own

UNCLE HENRY.

To the same.

Ruthwell, Monday, 8th Nov. 1835.

MY DEAREST MARY,—Having been left alone, I have been spending some time in serious and solemn reflection on the inscrutable ways of Him who doeth all things well, but whose footsteps are often in the great deep—my thoughts having been directed to his dealings with my own family as connected with yours, and particularly to the manner in which we have been planning for a more intimate union between those so deservedly dear to me, while He has been counterworking *—doubtless for our profit—that we may become partakers of his holiness. It is delightful, my dear girl, to be permitted to enjoy a privilege at once so exalted and so consolatory. O that I could enter more than I do into the true spirit of an employment which reason, and conscience, and a higher principle still—faith in the promises and declarations of the gospel—so entirely recommend. Is it with you as it is with me, that the higher I attempt to aspire after divine things, and the nearer I draw to the throne of the Eternal, the more deeply I perceive my own weakness and insufficiency, and the dead weight of earthliness which hangs on all my affections? On such occasions I am frequently tempted to ask myself if I do, after all, in good earnest believe, and if it is not rather a kind of heartless and profitless sentimentality which I mistake for religious feeling. How convincingly may such proofs of incompetency teach me that I have no strength of my own, and lead me to seek more earnestly for the strength which is made perfect in weakness!

The more I reflect on the way in which Cleish has opened up to Wallace, as a field for exertion in the cause of his Master and ours, the more I am inclined to think that this is to be the place in which he is to commence, if not to finish, his labours of love as an ordained minister of the gospel. He went off to Kinross with a very different view, and, even after his first

* Alluding to his son's disappointment in the parish of Urr.

object appeared to be fruitless, he was led to turn to another —when all at once this broke in upon him, without his seeking. There are many considerations, which not only seem to point to this, as the department in the vineyard which the great husbandman is offering him, but which even our short-sighted eyes may see as in many respects more suitable than those which we had previously planned for him. I like much the character of the parish and its inhabitants, as W. has described them. He may there practically learn the real nature of the union between a pastor and his flock—its duties, its sympathies, and its enjoyments, much better than in such a distracting and stubborn field as that of Urr; and though personally I have many reasons for preferring Urr,* yet these ought to be given to the winds when opposed to matters of higher concern. At all events, dearest Mary, let us wait patiently, and look with a spiritual and discerning eye on the directions of an overruling Providence. We may be assured that all will be for the best to us, if we do not, by our own worldly-minded meddlings, bring a curse instead of a blessing upon us; and even then it will be for the best to the church—being overruled by him who brings good out of evil, and causes even our very sins to praise him and promote his holy counsels. O how unsearchable are the ways of the unseen Ruler!

To the same.

Ruthwell, 5th January 1836.

My dearest Girl,—Here have we begun a new year with many hopes and glowing visions; but who can say if any of them will be realized? Oh, it is a fearful thing to look forward from the beginning to the end of a year; full, as experience teaches us it must be, of change, and dark and ominous as the prospect is to those who have acquired the dear-bought wisdom of age. But youth is buoyant with expectation of enjoyment; and it is well. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Yet why should any of us anticipate evil? We are under the guidance of unerring wisdom and of unwearied goodness. The hand is unseen—the way is dark and perplexing,

* This parish though twenty-three miles distant, is in the same synod as Ruthwell, and closely adjoins Kirkpatrick-Durham, where his eldest son had for some years been settled.

but the guide is sure. This is the wisdom which age ought to teach, and which nothing but want of faith prevents it from teaching. We cannot teach because we will not learn. At least I must confess this of myself. O how many unspeakably important instructions both of Providence and grace have I cast away from me! and here I am, with more than sixty years of experience on my head; and yet how much have I to learn —yes! and how much to unlearn! Dearest Mary! let me act at least as a beacon to you, if I dare not propose myself as a pilot; and learn betimes to set little comparative value on the events of time, by viewing every thing in the light of eternity. I am, most affectionately,

H. DUNCAN.

To the same.

Ruthwell, Friday night, 10 o'clock.

MY DEAREST MARY,

* * * *

Now that we have at last a near prospect of the fulfilment of that engagement which is to make you *in law*, as well as in cordial affection, my own daughter, I find a pleasure, which there is no reason to restrain, in cherishing towards you those paternal feelings that have so long been growing round my heart, and have been attached to it by so many roots for so many years. Wallace is preparing to leave us. We shall not see him here again till after his settlement, or rather till the end of July, when he will probably come to assist at my communion. I feel somewhat depressed at his leaving us as it were for life; yet I am sure I ought not, for he is going to a sphere of duty to which he has been providentially called, and where he has every prospect of usefulness. Had it pleased Providence I should have preferred greatly his being settled in this neighbourhood. But this is a selfish view, and I cannot doubt that it is better ordered otherwise. We must unite our prayers, my dear girl, that the new sphere in which he seems destined to move may be conducive to the best interests of the Church of Christ, and to the salvation of the souls to be committed to his charge. The duty of a minister of the Gospel is highly responsible, though we lay it too little to heart; and not a slight responsibility rests also on the head of a minister's wife. If she be really a *help meet* for him, she will show her meetness

by affording him every assistance in her power, in promoting the great objects of his ministry, without going out of her proper sphere; and much she may have in her power, not only in privately stimulating his exertions, but in going hand in hand with him in many duties. I look confidently for all this at your hands. I do trust that you will find the station of a minister's wife, though not an exalted one as respects the opinion of the world or worldly possessions, one of the most useful, and, notwithstanding its responsibility, one of the most desirable in which Providence could place you. God grant you all the happiness and all the means of doing good you anticipate.

B's. school is thriving to admiration. There are now forty infants attending it. Our Sabbath-schools, too, are doing well. We have established monthly meetings of the teachers, from which we are likely to derive much good, and have, in consequence, resolved on monthly examinations of the schools in rotation. There are about one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty scholars in all the schools, besides B's. Sabbath morning class, which makes thirty more. Our week-day schools, for religious instruction, are also, I trust, doing some good, though not so well attended as could be wished.

In my Saturday's class I am reading the "Pilgrim's Progress" with Scott's Notes, which interests the young men and impresses religious truth on their minds. We read also a part of the Bible, and I examine and comment on it. All this may, I trust, be blessed to some; but the heart is hard and insensible, and there may be much head-knowledge without the heart going along. We must pray for the assistance of the Spirit, without which all our labours are vain. Believe me to be, dearest Mary, your very affectionate *Father!*

UNCLE HENRY.

In October following, Dr Duncan was united to Mrs Lundie, the widow of the minister of Kelso, whose death had occurred only a few weeks later than that of Mrs Duncan. Mutual sympathy in their respective bereavements, the most perfect harmony of sentiment in their views of divine truth, and a similar ardour in the cause of religion, made this union fraught with the happiest results. It would be indelicate to the sur-

vivor to say all that truth might prompt on this subject. Well known as she is to the religious public, by her valuable and interesting work on Revivals, and several biographies, including those of two of her children, it will be sufficiently understood how congenial with his increasing spirituality of mind, must have been the companionship of her who, from this time till the day of his death, gladdened his home, supported his faith, and aided his efforts. Her zealous endeavours to promote the spiritual good of all the flock, more especially those of her own sex, both by visits among the sick and destitute, and by meetings for devotion and instruction, were singularly well suited to arrest the careless and awaken the drowsy. And it cannot be doubted that a blessing in many cases attended these labours of love, prosecuted as they were through good and bad report during the eventful period of her residence in Ruthwell.

Some time previous to this event, Dr Duncan had commenced the preparation of the work on which his literary fame must chiefly rest, "The Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons." It has been already stated, that the design contemplated in it was to furnish an interesting paper for every day in the year, on such objects and operations of nature as are best fitted to illustrate the power, the wisdom, and the beneficence of the great Creator. This work consists of four volumes, relating, respectively, to the four seasons of the year; and the mode of publication which he adopted was, to produce each volume at the commencement of the period to which it relates. Beginning with Winter, his first volume was issued from the press about the end of October 1836. This step he found, however, to have been prematurely taken, in as much as it imposed

the necessity of devoting himself to the work with greater exclusiveness than he found easily compatible, either with his somewhat declining vigour, or the increased scale of his parochial duties.

He had enjoyed a reasonable portion of time for preparing his first volume, but those that followed, depended in a great measure on an unceasing and untiring application. Seven papers on the various subjects which he had proposed to treat of, must be got ready for the printer every week, in order to overtake the work he had assigned himself; and the extensive reading, the careful arrangement, the laborious writing, which this involved, during the nine following months, demanded a spirit of studious perseverance, which nothing short of the most determined energy of character could have enabled him to manifest. If not always an eminently early riser, Dr Duncan was habitually accustomed, when any occasion demanded it, to sacrifice several hours of his morning repose to study; and it was by this means that he accomplished the task. Each morning, about four or five o'clock, he entered his library, and devoted the earliest and best portion of the day to this work. Some assistance, indeed, was rendered him by several members of his family, who provided him with a few papers, on subjects either selected by themselves, or furnished from his table. With this slight aid, he succeeded, almost beyond expectation, in keeping steadily ahead of the printer; and in thus enabling his publisher to fulfil his contract with the public, evincing a rapidity in literary labour, which those who are best able to imitate it, will most readily appreciate.

Of the character of the work we need say little, as it is still prominently before the world, and has been

very largely circulated. It is essentially popular—bringing out the more graceful and beautiful contrivances of the Creator's hand in prominent relief, for our admiration and gratitude, and opening up, in interesting detail, the natural history of the human race, in their savage and civilized state, in various circumstances—under the torrid zone, the milder temperatures of such latitudes as our own, and the savage desolation of the polar regions; and giving, as it proceeds, many instructive lessons in the arts, as well as the sciences. The Reviews, and less elaborate notices, by which it was introduced to public regard, were uniformly highly flattering.

The Rev. Dr Cheever, of New York, the well-known illustrator of the life of Bunyan, thus expresses his opinion:—"'There is one delightful production which we may mention with unmixed praise, adapted for all classes, and full of the lessons both of science and religion—it is the 'Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons,' by Dr Duncan—it is composed in the very spirit of Cowper:

'Acquaint thyself with God if thou wouldst taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before.
Thine eye shall be instructed; and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish with divine delight,
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.'"

But I forbear to say more in praise of a work which the public have already so highly appreciated, and of which many editions have already been demanded.

During the progress of this laborious work he thus writes to his daughter-in-law, Mrs Wallace Duncan,—

Ruthwell, 6th March 1837.

My dearest Mary,—

* * * *

Lady M—— informed your mother and me, yesterday, that

she had heard from a lady, that did not know her acquaintance with Wallace, that he was doing a great deal of good in his parish, especially in a collier village on its borders, and was much esteemed for his active and zealous exertions as a minister. This is very gratifying, not as a subject of vanity,—alas! how far short are our most unremitting and pious efforts—but as an evidence that some good is doing. It is not often that I hear my *own* exertions mentioned with approbation, but when I do, it has always a humbling and depressing effect on my mind. It is most painful to be conscious that we cannot think of ourselves so well as other people think, because they do not know us.

I have not yet entirely recovered from the effects of influenza. I neither feel so vigorous and buoyant in body or mind; and I begin to fear that it is the effect of advancing age, in which case I must just submit, not only without murmuring, but with cheerfulness. Whatever is the will of our Heavenly Father, his children should receive with thankfulness,—"In *every thing* give thanks." This is both the duty and the privilege of the Christian.

The feebleness of which he here complains, was traced by his friends, as much to the extreme exertion to which the preparation of his book subjected him, as to influenza. It was evident, in fact, that this effort, additional as it was to all his other necessary labours, joined with the natural effect of increasing years, was telling very unfavourably upon his frame. The year which followed was marked by a great decline in his accustomed vigour, which grieved, and somewhat alarmed his family, while he was, himself, not unfrequently visited with feelings of anxiety, and the idea that his time of useful exertion was not likely to be long protracted. His energies seemed wasted, and his spirits flagged.

Towards the close of 1838, he heard of an intention to propose him for the chair of the ensuing General Assembly, with feelings of unaffected pain. The proposal, he said, had come "*too late.*" "Yes!" said Dr

Macfarlane of Greenock in reply, "too late, indeed, as regards your claims, which ought, in this way, long ere now to have been acknowledged; but not yet, I trust, too late, either as regards your willingness, or your physical ability." His friends had never seen him desponding before, and grieved to observe that his once buoyant spirits drooped and declined so sensibly. During the following winter and spring, however, his health providentially improved, and when a final arrangement was necessary, he was so well as to feel himself at liberty, though not without reluctance, to permit his nomination to the Moderator's chair, to which, accordingly, he was unanimously elected.

This was not a mere appointment of compliment. The times were peculiar. Even when the Church's controversies were two years younger, a Moderator had been chosen after a severe contest, on the ground claimed for him by the venerable Dr Chalmers, that he was "thoroughly to be trusted;" and now that she had been driven more within the breakers, no man could be safely raised to so important a position, who did not entirely possess the confidence of his brethren. The prescriptive majority had just yielded to the faithful reforming band, who, long accustomed to record their unheeded protests against measures which their consciences repudiated, now found themselves, by their increased numbers, placed in circumstances in which they could efficiently assert the hallowed principles, at once of the Gospel and of their Church, and were already engaged in hotly and successfully contesting the old question of Scotland's ecclesiastical liberties. Their success in the courts of the Church, had already awakened, in other quarters, questions of

jurisdiction and of law, the settlement of which might prove extremely difficult and dangerous. The Moderator of the General Assembly, whose office required him frequently to represent the mind of the Church, never at any previous period more needed the graces of integrity and prudence—good temper and determination.

The Assembly over which he was called to preside, met as usual in May, and proved to be one of the most important and critical which modern times have witnessed. This will be understood by glancing at a few of the particular cases with which it was called upon to deal. In one of these (Auchterarder), the Court of Session had, in March 1838, by a majority of eight judges to five, given a decision, which was afterwards affirmed by the House of Lords, under the direction of Lords Cottenham and Brougham, substantially denying the legality of the Veto law. The *ground* of this judgment, as elaborately laid down by these two judges, was more fatal to the Church's independence than the judgment itself; for it contracted within the narrowest limits, the right of presbyteries in deciding on the qualifications of presentees, and rendered it incompetent for them to give any effect whatever to the wishes of congregations.

This was sufficiently alarming, but there was another case now pending,—that of Marnoch, in the presbytery of Strathbogie,—which, though it was as yet only in its earlier stages, was, if possible, even more threatening, in consequence of the insubordinate proceedings of the inferior church court. The Crown had issued a presentation in favour of a Mr Edwards, in September 1837; and when he had preached before the congregation, only one individual in the parish signed his

call, while all the elders, and two hundred and fifty-four heads of families, out of a roll of three hundred, dissented against his settlement. The presbytery declined to give immediate effect to the Veto law, and it was not till a somewhat peremptory order, requiring this course, had been issued by the General Assembly, in May 1838, that they saw fit to pronounce Mr Edwards disqualified for induction. This decision was communicated to the Government, and the Crown —taking no part in the controversy, but rather apparently acknowledging the Church's right to legislate as she had done—issued a new presentation in favour of Mr D. Henry, whose appointment was welcomed by the people. Mr Edwards, in the mean time, encouraged by the unexpected decision in the case formerly noticed, applied to the Court of Session for an interdict (or injunction) prohibiting the presbytery from obeying the law of the Church, and particularly debarring them from settling the new presentee, or taking any steps with this view. This was at once granted, and the two jurisdictions were thus plainly at issue on a point which the Church could not but hold to be purely spiritual, and which, notwithstanding any temporal interests that might be collaterally involved, she was therefore bound by every consideration of allegiance to Christ, and duty to his people, to decide for herself.

Besides these two cases, which, at the respective stages to which this short narrative has brought them, came directly before the Assembly of 1839, there were other proceedings well known to be taking place at the time of its meeting in various parts of Scotland, which wore a similar aspect of gloom and uncertainty to the Church's outward prosperity. One case, espe-

cially, deserves to be alluded to (Lethendy), in which a faithful presbytery had lately refused to obey the command of the civil judges, and had proceeded, in spite of a very formidable interdict from the Court of Session, to the spiritual duty of ordination. The ministers who had taken part in this act were, at the time of the Assembly's meeting, threatened with severe proceedings for "contempt of court," such being the opprobrious designation given to the crime of obeying the laws of the Church of which they were ministers, in a matter essentially spiritual.

It was under so many gloomy circumstances that Dr Duncan was called to take the chair of the Assembly, and he did so with a solemn sense of the difficulty of the time, and the necessity of divine guidance both forhimself and the Church.

It had been the custom of his predecessors to entertain, each morning of the Assembly's sitting, a numerous company of the brethren, and other friends, at a public breakfast, and he resolved that this occasion should, if possible, be improved, so as to give a wholesome tone to the proceedings of every day. He accordingly introduced the hitherto neglected duty of social worship, which occupied, at least, half-an-hour previous to the commencement of the repast.

The spirit of devotion thus indicated, it was his desire to encourage in every stage of the proceedings; and the blessing of the Head of the Church thus invoked, seemed to rest on that Assembly. It will not be thought necessary that I should give details. It is enough to say that the supreme court of the Church showed itself equal to the emergency. Unmoved by threatened penalties, unawed by the frown of statesmen and of judges, and with all the conse-

quences of faithfulness full in view, on the motion of Dr Chalmers, the principle of non-intrusion was reaffirmed, as having been coeval with the Reformed Church of Scotland, and an integral part of her constitution, which could not be abandoned; while, in order, if possible, to obviate the many evils resulting from a collision between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions, steps were taken for opening communications with the government of the country.

"It was impossible," as was remarked in a newspaper account of the proceedings, "not to admire the manly and impartial manner in which Dr Duncan presided over the whole of the important business of the venerable court." But while maintaining the necessary attitude of dignified neutrality, he at the same time cordially concurred in the measures now adopted, and at its opening, as well as at its close, he took advantage of the opportunity which the forms of the Assembly allowed him, of expressing, in plain and forcible terms, in presence of the Royal Commissioner, the grave necessity under which the Church was laid, of acting faithfully to her Great and Only Head, and therefore of withstanding all unscriptural attempts, from whatever quarter, to arrest her in the reformation of old abuses, or in prosecuting that course of improvement on which she had entered. The Assembly was a faithful one, worthy of the purest ages of the Church; and when the brethren who had there contended earnestly for her long neglected purity, retired to their several homes, the prevailing sentiment among them was, that they would not retract, were it possible, one sentiment they had solemnly embodied in recorded acts, nor recede a hair's-breadth from the position

they had taken up. Yet the course to which the Church was now solemnly committed, in all probability involved the question of her endowments and secular privileges, and threatened all her faithful sons with civil penalties, to which till lately they had thought it impossible, that under the laws of their free country, and for such a cause, they could have been subjected.

This Assembly was distinguished also for a most important step in the promotion of the Gospel. I allude to the establishment of the Jewish Mission, in preparation for which funds had already been collected. Four esteemed brethren, Drs Keith and Black, and Messrs Bonar and M'Cheyne, were already on their way to visit the ancient people of God in foreign lands. The Church, when purest at home, has always been most active in her missionary efforts abroad; and her friends were cheered by this step, not only as a new proof of her vitality, but as interesting her in the promise made to Abraham many thousand years before, "I will bless them that bless thee." Genesis, xii. 3.

CHAPTER XXV.

ENCOURAGEMENTS—A FEATHER IN THE WIND—STRATHBOGIE LETTERS.

It must have been cheering to all the spiritually-minded ministers and members of the Church of Scotland, as it was to Dr Duncan, to observe the striking tokens of the Divine approval which it pleased her glorious Head to grant to the Church of Scotland in this season of her conflict. At Kilsyth a remarkable outpouring of the Spirit had been already vouchsafed, which was followed this summer by similar manifestations at Dundee, Perth, Dunfermline, Jedburgh, Kelso, and several other places, causing the unbelieving world to wonder, and the Lord's people to adore. Multitudes in these places were brought under the deepest concern for their souls, sin was rebuked, meetings for worship were multiplied, and a lively interest in the cause of the Gospel was excited.

When news of spiritual quickening came from various parts of the country, Dr Duncan was much stirred up, both in public and in the closet, and read at the weekly prayer-meetings all the information which he could obtain, urging on the people that the same Holy Spirit was free, and waiting to be gracious to them.

The result was visible in a fuller attendance at devotional exercises on week-days, at classes, and at the monthly meetings of Sabbath-school teachers. Along with this, every minister from whom edification might be expected was eagerly sought after, and invited to preach, so that lighting and filling the church on the evenings of working days, became a common thing.

In the mean time, the Church's position became more and more critical. In June 1839, immediately after the rising of the Assembly, the faithful ministers, whom I have mentioned as having refused obedience to the commands of the Court of Session, were called to the bar and publicly censured for their alleged contumacy, and were straitly enjoined to avoid like conduct in future, on pain of severer punishment. They left the court "rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus."

Meantime negotiations were entered into with statesmen and legislators, in order, if possible, to avert the consequences of a collision between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions, by a "declaratory act," recognising the long-cherished principles of the historical Church of Scotland, and compelling the civil courts to keep within their own province. Several attempts were made with this view. In the spring of 1840, the Earl of Aberdeen introduced a bill into the House of Lords for the purpose of settling the controversy; but the principle of non-intrusion was not recognised in it, and it came to be apparent that neither the Government nor Parliament would willingly consent to yield to the Church the right to maintain and act upon her principles which she desired. These principles began to be branded in various quarters as revolutionary and

dangerous, and her faithful ministers, whose loyalty hitherto had never even for a moment been questioned, were regarded in high places with an eye of jealous hostility.

In these circumstances, Dr Duncan was appointed by the Commission of the General Assembly, to head a deputation to London, for the purpose of presenting an address of congratulation to the Queen on the occasion of Her Majesty's marriage. This was a measure of usual respect for the Crown, and dictated by those sentiments of unabated and sincere loyalty for which the Church of Scotland has always been conspicuous. Yet it somewhat prominently brought out the spirit of enmity with which her proceedings were viewed by persons connected with the Court, while it gave an opportunity for the display of that firmness of purpose for which, mild as he usually was, Dr Duncan was often remarkable. When the deputation reached London, they learnt from the minister of the Crown, to whom they applied, that the address would not be received, according to old precedent, *on the throne*, but at a private audience. This change, at such a time, needed explanation, which, when asked, was not satisfactory; and the deputation were led to believe that an insult was thus aimed at the faithful Church which they now represented, and probably for no other reason than her faithfulness. It was resolved, under the circumstances, not to compromise the Church by giving up her ancient privilege, though but a courtly and conventional one. Dr Duncan having obtained an interview with the minister, frankly stated to him the views of the deputation; and after a series of negotiations, at the close of which it was apparent that the important question was as far

from a satisfactory adjustment as ever, it was finally resolved, by himself and his brethren, to bring the matter to a speedy issue. With their concurrence he wrote to the proper quarter, stating the determination of himself and his colleagues to present no address from the Church of Scotland, except it was to be received with the full amount of accustomed respect; that by the refusal of the usual courtesy they had already been too long detained from their duties at home; and that it would be necessary for them now, with great reluctance, immediately to return, carrying back the address, unless it could be received at an early date. The case needed nothing more.—Government had no intention of making a case against themselves, and of injuring their popularity in Scotland; all difficulties were soon obviated, and, without a day's unnecessary delay, the deputation were most graciously introduced to royalty in the usual manner. This trifling incident was noticed as a feather in the wind, and showed plainly, that the Church had little to expect in high places, if she continued to persevere in her career of improvement and self-reform.

But we must proceed to more important events, and more testing circumstances.

The presbytery of Strathbogie, still willing to avail themselves of the civil law, in order to avoid, under its shelter, the duty of obeying the ecclesiastical, had now advanced a step farther in their rebellion. Having obtained a declarator from the Court of Session, pretending to give them the necessary authority, they had sustained the call to Mr Edwards, and, in defiance of the authority of the General Assembly, had taken steps towards his settlement. With a view to arrest them in a course so disgraceful to themselves, so dis-

loyal to the Church, and so fraught with danger to the cause of order and of liberty, these offenders, to the number of seven ministers, being the whole acting majority in the presbytery, were, in December 1839, suspended by the Commission of Assembly, to whom the case had been remitted, from their ministerial and judicial functions. Far from yielding to this sentence, however, these mutinous disturbers of the Church's peace obtained from the Court of Session an interdict, prohibiting the execution of the ecclesiastical sentence; and under cover of this act of a civil court, held their ecclesiastical status to be restored, and proceeded with the preliminaries to Mr Edwards' induction, which they had all but completed when the Assembly of 1840 met.

This circumstance called many faithful ministers prominently into the field of contest. From the date of the Commission's sentence, in December, the Church had held the parishes of the suspended ministers to be destitute of pastors, and in order to supply the people of the district with religious ordinances, various ministers were deputed in succession to occupy their pastoral ground. Among these Dr Duncan volunteered to take his place. These resolute men entered on this duty not without hazard. The Court of Session, which was now fairly arrayed against the Church, had intimated, very plainly, their determination to check the spirit of resistance to their assumed authority, by the severest compulsitors in their power; and fines and imprisonment were seriously anticipated. If any penalty awaited them, it was certain that Dr Duncan, whose position as late Moderator gave him special prominence, would not escape. On his resolution becoming known to stand in the breach at all hazards,

many who loved him felt it a duty to remonstrate. His parish, generally, were deeply affected by the thought of the risk to which he was about to expose himself; and his brother, Dr T. Duncan, who had not sympathised with most of the Church's late proceedings, addressed to him very urgent and affectionate entreaties to avoid consequences which might be most distressing. Dr Duncan himself was not apprehensive that serious results would ensue from the discharge of this duty; and at all events, he was persuaded that it would be both pusillanimous, and a departure from principle, to decline the service.

Early in the month of May he proceeded to Huntly, the little capital of the district. "The first incident that seemed really to pierce the heart of the parish," says a member of the family, whose MS. account of the transactions of this period is now before me, and will in the subsequent narrative be often quoted, "was when Dr Duncan was invited to proceed to Strathbogie, to supply for a time one or two of the parishes there, whose ministers had been suspended. The emotion and anxiety were very great, for they understood that he went, having professed his willingness, if interdicted, to pay the forfeit of disobedience by going to prison. Many were the visits of condolence, the tears, and the anxious enquiries, that passed in our flock after his departure." Scarcely had he entered the district before he was accosted by a messenger-at-arms, who placed in his hand the legal instrument by which the Civil Courts pretended to limit his duties as a Minister of Christ. The act was performed with downcast looks and stammered apologies, as by one ashamed of his office, and being expected, it created no surprise. A blessed effect had already been

produced in the district, under the preaching of those ministers who had previously visited it, and who were now affectionately known as the "Commission Ministers." The Gospel, which in former days had been there but feebly, if not imperfectly proclaimed, had, under their fervent ministry, been accompanied with a signal blessing; and some drops of the showers, which were now refreshing other districts of the land, had evidently lighted on Strathbogie. But we must leave the account of his sojourn, in this interesting neighbourhood, to be gathered from the following extracts from letters written during this period, chiefly from the scene of this delightful manifestation of divine grace.

To Mrs Duncan, Ruthwell.

Huntly, Monday morning, 11th May 1840.

* * * Yesterday I preached to a crowded audience in the old Popish chapel at 11 o'clock, reading and expounding the 8th chapter of Romans, and preaching from—"O wretched man that I am, who shall," &c. The people were most attentive, and evinced an interest in every thing that was said, which was extremely gratifying. At half past two I attended the Sabbath-school founded by Mr Lewis of Leith. There are about 120 scholars and seven teachers, whose hearts seem to be in their work. What specially struck and pleased me was, that there are so many lads and lasses of the age of those who attend our Friday and Saturday classes; many of them very intelligent and ready with their answers. I taught a girls' class, while a number of the people crowded round to hear my mode of examining and explaining. This lasted about an hour, after which I addressed the school. At six o'clock we again met for worship, when I preached on "The dead praise not the Lord," to a still more crowded audience. I think there must have been nearly one thousand present, though I was told that the coldness and threatening aspect of the weather had kept numbers away. The chapel is a strange place of worship. It had been rather a respectable building, but being found far too small, they have taken down

a great part of the back wall and added a wooden shed, which gives much more, room but is not *very* handsome. * * * After I returned to the inn, I assembled the family, to the number of ten persons, and read a chapter and prayed with them. So you see I am strong. * * * *

To the same.

Huntly, 13th May 1840.

Yesterday I breakfasted with Dr ——, a very interesting young medical practitioner, the same who, you may remember, at an early period of this contest, by a rapid ride, secured the Popish chapel for £50. * * * After breakfast, the doctor took me to see a patient, a poor man, who had been struck with apoplexy, and thus arrested in a career of worldliness. I spoke earnestly and affectionately to the poor man on the state of his soul, and he listened with apparent earnestness. I read to him the 12th chapter to the Hebrews, on which I commented till I observed that his attention began to flag. I then prayed with him and took my leave, he very earnestly inviting me back. I had been sent for to this sick bed, but I do not know whether or not at the suggestion of the old man himself. I hear he has been inquiring for me since, and shall see him again to-morrow. After this I made some calls on some of the more influential members of the congregation, highly respectable, and apparently deeply impressed individuals. * * * * In the evening we had a prayer-meeting, when nearly four hundred were present, and were most attentive. Mr Robertson of Gartly opened the meeting with praise and prayer ; I then read and expounded, at some length, the 4th chapter to the Ephesians. There could not be a more still and attentive audience. Mr Noble then concluded the service with prayer and praise, after which a very interesting duty remained for me to perform, the presenting to Mr M'Kenzie, the Commission's missionary, some valuable standard works from the females of the congregation, in token of their affection and gratitude, on account of his disinterested services. I found that by all these exertions my cold was increased ; and as I am very desirous of saving myself for the General Assembly, I have, by the advice of the doctor, kept the house to-day, and my bed also till about four o'clock. I took some fever-medicine, and I afterwards had mustard applied to my throat, which

gave me relief. * * * * I went to call on Mr Walker * yesterday and did not find him at home. He has not returned the call—so here it probably ends; but I do not regret having made the attempt.

To the same.

Huntly, Thursday, 14th May 1840.

* * * * When I last wrote I was labouring under an increased cold. * * * * The precautions which I took had the desired effect, to a considerable extent, and I was able to dine out yesterday and preach in the evening, the latter not without some inconvenience, but I have felt better since. To-day the weather became suddenly as fine as it was formerly coarse; and having received a pressing invitation, I walked about a mile and a quarter into the country to see a poor young man, a farmer's son, who is apparently dying of consumption. On my return (tired enough) I met Mr Henry, the missionary in Marnoch, who came to say that he durst not give me the church on Friday (to-morrow), as two of the heritors had threatened them with an interdict if any more Commission ministers should preach there on a *week-day*, but entreating me, in the name of the parishioners, to preach there *on Sabbath evening*. The arrangement will probably be, that I preach here in the morning, and then go to Marnoch to do duty in the evening, Mr Henry coming to supply my place here. I shall stay, in that case, all night at the house of Mr Stronach, son of the late minister, who will convey me to the Aberdeen coach on Monday morning, and so farewell to this interesting place; interesting for its spiritual state, not for its natural beauties.

After Mr Henry left me, I met a company of pious females by appointment, one of whom had previously come, under distress, to consult me on the state of her soul; and from them I was led first to an interesting young man in bad health, and then to another group of interesting females. I returned between three and four o'clock to dinner, and went about six to visit Mrs C—— (the doctor's mother), whence I went to the diet of catechising. There were upwards of twenty young people who presented themselves for examination, and the audience

* The suspended parish minister of Huntly.

could not be less than between one and two hundred, perhaps more, who were exceedingly attentive. As I went out, a very respectable looking man begged me to name a time when I could visit him, as there were various individuals in his neighbourhood who wished to converse with me on their spiritual state. I named Saturday at ten o'clock. Besides him I have been furnished with a list of several others, whom I must also visit on Saturday; so I have plenty to do.

I long greedily to hear of you all. * * * Am I either to see or hear from you in Edinburgh, dearest M.? It is sad to be labouring almost beyond my strength in this distant place, and to feel as if I were cut off from all that is dear to me, looking at my expiring fire—

Sad and lonely, sad and lonely,
Musing, as the tints decay,
On the wife I love so dearly,
And on pleasure's fleeting day.

But "I am *irket*, and must go to bed," as Queen Mary said to Bothwell. God bless you and ours, dearest M., most fervently prays your ever affectionate,

H. D.

To the same.

Edinburgh, 23d May.

I cannot remember whether or not I gave you any account of the very interesting transactions of Saturday in Huntly. I went, on invitation, to the house of Mr —— (as I informed you I intended) at ten o'clock on Saturday. There I found as many assembled as a small room would hold. I prayed, read a chapter and commented on it, and then prayed again, with the view of dismissing the meeting; but, to my surprise, not one of them would move. They just sat quietly down again, and looked eagerly for something more. I had already occupied more than an hour with them, but had just to begin again. I recommended small knots of Christian friends meeting statedly for prayer on different evenings of the week, so that they might, if circumstances would admit, attend more meetings than one. I stated to them the mode adopted in Kilsyth, showed its advantages, and warned them against *snares*. Most of them were melted to tears; and when I rose and pronounced the blessing, they shook me heartily by the hand in taking leave. I never

felt myself more cordially drawn out towards fellow-Christians. A Seceder, who was present, and deeply affected, (for here there is little distinction of sects), begged me to visit an old deaf woman of the same denomination, which I accordingly did. A most interesting specimen I found her of the power of the Gospel—poverty-stricken, but rejoicing in hope. From her I went from place to place, as I received information of the wishes or character of individuals; and it was between three and four when I reached the inn, exhausted in body but rejoicing in spirit. Next day (Sabbath) I preached on Jacob's Wrestling in the forenoon, and on Ezra ix. 8, "a little reviving in our bondage," in the evening. I had announced the evening sermon and exercise, as intended to be in reference to the meeting of the General Assembly, and in part fulfilment of the recommendation of the Commission; and although the night was exceedingly bad—the rain pouring, and the wind blowing —the place was crowded wherever a dry seat could be found, and there were many who sat under a constant dropping. I preached an hour and a quarter to a most attentive audience; and when I came down from the pulpit many were waiting to take leave of me with moist eyes and hearty shakings of the hand. I never met with such cordial Christian affection before, and I fear never may again. O how delightful it is to preach the Gospel to willing and melting hearers! One can understand better the warm affection expressed by Paul in his epistles towards his converts, after witnessing such a scene as this. I shall never forget this people. I left Huntly amidst a pour of rain, yet there were several waiting at the coach to bid me a last farewell.

At the date of the last letter the General Assembly of 1840 was sitting in Edinburgh. Dr Duncan had hastened to the Metropolis in time to open the Court, which he did in a sermon on "Alternate periods of Revival and Decay," from the text, Psalm lxxxv. 6, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" The subject was entirely congenial with his present train of thought; but he had so taxed his waning vigour at Strathbogie, and the remains of the feverish cold with which he had been there visited

were so manifest, that his voice was hardly audible, and he spoke in a manner so feeble as to make him painfully feel that his labour was vain. His return to Ruthwell, at the rising of the Assembly, was marked by deeper earnestness in his work, and a more solemn devotion to the cause of his Master.

"When he came back," says the family MS. already referred to, "his lively prayers, and his interesting narrations of the state of many souls in Strathbogie, seemed to refresh us all, and there was little talk of the probable result of the Church's affairs compared to what there was on spiritual things. It is affecting to look back on those years when hope was still strong in his mind that the rights of the Church would be respected. Two of the dear brethren, who used to go with him to synods, repeatedly met at Ruthwell Manse, and studied the state of things with anxious but steady speculation, and many solemn conferences were closed with prayer. And when on their return from the Synod, where men loud and wise for this world had been contending, how did they prize our quiet home and opportunity to seek Divine guidance together! It was then, I think, that the deepest feeling was experienced by the dear departed. He looked on the Church of his childhood's habit and his manhood's choice with profound regret. Convinced that in her principles there was soundness and strength, it overwhelmed him with grief to see her overborne by an interference that he counted unscriptural and illegitimate. So keen was this feeling in him that, more than once, nay many times, at the prayer-meetings, he was obliged to stop and weep. It was remarkable that he never was so overcome in other villages; but in the 'Society Room' at Ruthwell he could not com-

mand himself. This we accounted for in this manner. From his entrance on the ministry, more than forty years before, he had wedded his affections to his people. That room he had procured for the Male Friendly Society, and all its useful operations were there carried on. There he had helped them about their ballots for the militia in war-time—there, in threatened invasion, he had aroused his volunteers—there he had first unfolded to them his opening scheme of a Savings Bank—there, in times of scarcity, he had planned with them the bringing of shiploads of Indian corn and other provisions—there his parish examinations were in part conducted—there he had many times examined a Sabbath-school—and there, times uncounted, had he met with his people in the evening to worship God. Two Sabbath evenings in particular, when he was so completely overcome, there sat before him those whose spiritual condition he had never been able to influence, and when he looked on them he wept."

In 1841 he was much interested in Missionary intelligence from the South Seas; and it was with an overflow of feeling that he read to his flock the journals of a dear youth, whom he held in the love and esteem with which a parent regards his own well-approved child. As he read he used to describe the condition, manners, and worship of the islanders before they received the Gospel. Many of these journals have since been published in a little volume by Mrs Duncan, entitled "Missionary Life in Samoa," but they can never be read with the effect which they produced in the "Society Room" at Ruthwell, when the teacher and the people alike were melted down.

The following letter has been recently returned, with other relics, from Samoa:—

To Mr George A. Lundie, Samoa.

Ruthwell Manse, 7th May 1841.

I have been so variously occupied to-day, my dearest George, that I am obliged to content myself with this apology for a letter; but I trust you believe that I am deeply interested in every thing connected with you, and that you are frequently in my thoughts and daily in my prayers.

What an interesting place Providence has sent you to, and how remarkable the awakening which has been going on there! I am sure it must be refreshing to your spirit to be in the midst of it, and to take a part in it. I am sorry to say that we, in this parish and neighbourhood, are still cold and dead, although I am not without hope that some good is doing. Your mother is very assiduous, and, in some respects I trust, successful in awakening some minds. As for myself, I feel the feebleness of age yearly pressing on me more and more, and am like the man in the iron apartment, who had the inexpressible horror of finding the limits of his prison narrowing day by day, with the certainty of being inevitably crushed to death by the diabolical machinery. But I know that the machinery *here* is not *diabolical*, but, on the contrary, moved by a father's hand. O if I had but faith to believe that I was prepared for the rapidly approaching event, it would be looked forward to as a most happy consummation—a relief, not indeed from a gloomy prison, for innumerable blessings are scattered around me even here, but from a banishment from my father's house—an admission into all the glories and delights of paradise—or far more than paradise—a father's smile, a brother's love—the society of those I loved on earth—of the just made perfect—of angels—of God—of Christ. O that we could appreciate this happy prospect!

Where are you now, and what are you doing? I frequently try to fancy you among your sable friends, delighting to communicate to them the glad tidings which cheer your own heart. But you are perhaps at this moment ploughing the wide ocean on your return home. I would rather think of you in this situation, as it would indicate your return to perfect health, and our near prospect of meeting you again.

But I must conclude, as the box is just preparing to be shut, with its strange farrago of useful contents. We long much to hear from you. I need not say how affectionately I am your father,

HENRY DUNCAN.

I cannot close this chapter without mentioning, that about this time, he received an invitation from a mechanics' institute in Glasgow to visit that town, and deliver to a class of young men several lectures on geology. He gladly embraced the opportunity of reviving former tastes, and of ministering to the thirst for knowledge, which he always rejoiced to observe among the rising hope of a future generation. His lectures were printed at the close by request of his hearers, and specially for their use.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FUTILE NEGOTIATIONS—LETTERS—A CRISIS—THE CONVOCATION.

THINGS seemed rapidly ripening for a crisis. The Strathbogie case was terminated on the 21st of January 1841, by the most flagrant and astounding act of intrusion that Scotland had ever witnessed. The whole of the parishioners arose, took up their Bibles, and left the church where they and their fathers had for ages worshipped, before the pretended ordination service was begun, and not one of them remained to welcome a man who, by suspended ministers, deriving their usurped authority from a civil court, and contrary to the laws of the Church, was violently thrust upon their parish. The General Assembly of that year met while a bill was in the act of being introduced into the House of Lords, by the Duke of Argyle, with a view to obviate the dangers arising to the Church from the unsatisfactory state of the law, as lately declared. At this Assembly that bill was discussed and approved of by a large majority. A lively hope came to be entertained that it would pass the legislature and give peace to the Church. This,

however, was doomed to disappointment. The bill, opposed by the Government of Sir Robert Peel, was subsequently abandoned by its author, and thus an opportunity was for ever lost of obtaining justice for the long-cherished principles of the Church of Scotland.

The Moderate party were, by this failure, encouraged in their insubordination. At a meeting of the Commission, in August following, the conduct of certain brethren, who had assisted the deposed ministers of Strathbogie in dispensing the sacrament, came under discussion, and it was resolved that they should be proceeded against by their respective presbyteries; whereupon Dr Cook and Mr Robertson of Ellon, the recognised leaders of the Moderate party, intimated their intention "to ascertain, from competent authority, what party in the Church constituted the Establishment, and was entitled to its endowments and privileges." The following letter gives a view of Dr Duncan's opinions and feelings at this crisis:—

To the Rev. G. J. C. Duncan, Kirkpatrick-Durham Manse.

Ruthwell Manse, 17th August 1841.

My dear George,

* * * *

With regard to the state of the Church, I cannot say that I am in great alarm, although somewhat excited by the proceedings of the Commission. My only fear arises from the danger of defection in *our own ranks*. There is much cowardice, much self-seeking, much selfishness, in some of those who are loudest in their profession of evangelical principles; and I am afraid that the terror of losing their livings would operate on many to induce them, in the hour of trial, to desert their principles. If this defection takes place to any great extent, our cause might be greatly injured, and our enemies would gain a most

unhappy triumph. I have no doubt that the prospect of this has emboldened the Moderates. They cannot be so mad as to wish that two-thirds of the ministers of the Church should be ejected. They have no idea that it will come to this; but they want to make an example of a few of the leaders to terrify the rest into submission. This, I am persuaded, is their tactics; and I do fear it may, to a certain extent, succeed. Now, then, is the time to make a stand, and to show our strength before our weaker brethren be practised upon. I should be very glad if you could go to Edinburgh to be present at the public meeting; but, if you cannot, by all means write a decided and firm letter. I hope none of my children will show the white feather. Indeed I *know* they will not. I am myself looking calmly but determinedly to the possibility of being ejected, as I do not doubt that, if any suffer in this way, I will be one. But we must first have a struggle, in which I trust I shall not be behind. As to writing on the subject which you suggest, I do not doubt that many abler pens will be employed in the coming controversy. But should I find that I could do good by a publication, I would write *in my own name*. All this, however, is for future consideration. Meanwhile I am persuaded, that if our party remain true to their colours, the people would rally round us, and Sir Robert Peel, who is a cautious politician, would not venture on the rash step which the Moderates contemplate. I have no doubt, however, that they are acting under advice from high quarters. I see plainly that Lord Aberdeen is at the bottom of this. I shall be glad to hear from you again. Let us know how you all are, and kiss the *bairns* for grandpapa. Love to B——. I should be glad to see you. I am very affectionately yours,

H. DUNCAN.

Before proceeding with the narrative, it may be proper to introduce an extract from one valuable letter of Dr Duncan's, occurring in a correspondence which soon after this took place between Lord Brougham and himself. Nothing had surprised and pained the latter more than the award pronounced by the former, in the case already decided by the House of Lords;

and some remarks on this subject, uttered in the course of a Synod debate, having met his Lordship's eye in the public prints, led to a private remonstrance, to which this letter was the reply. It bears date 16th November 1841, and after an explanation of circumstances, showing that he made the statement complained of strictly in self-defence, he proceeds—

Most assuredly it was right in your Lordship to form your decision as a judge, not on general views of sound policy, but on an impartial interpretation of the law. You were, indeed, imperatively called to do this. Yet I may be permitted deeply to regret that the opinion you finally adopted should have proved so destructive to the best interests of our Church, giving rise, as it has done, on the part of the Court of Session, to a series of aggressions on our ecclesiastical rights and liberties, which, if confirmed by the higher powers, will not leave our Church the semblance of a Church of Christ; and will most certainly force its best members to leave its bosom. I cannot believe that you could anticipate these aggressions; and I do trust, that, if you had foreseen them, you would have abstained from touching on certain points, which, though not immediately involved in the question at issue, the Church felt to be of vital importance to her very existence. It was your strong adverse declarations on these points which compelled her to make a stand, when, otherwise, she would have been willing to rescind the *Veto* Act, and to fall back upon the *Call*, which is supposed by many (even as it is left by the iniquitous Jacobite Act of Queen Anne,) to leave to the members of the Church some important privileges that may be made greatly to modify a high-handed patronage.

Allow me to add, that my knowledge of all your previous views and prepossessions, as to liberty, both civil and religious, and as to the advantage of public institutions for instruction, and for training the minds of the great body of the people, left me no ground to doubt of your favourable views towards our Church; and that I do feel much gratified by the intimation—which, however, I did not require—that when you come to consider the question as a legislator, you will deal with it in

that enlightened and philanthropic spirit which distinguishes your character.

Your Lordship cannot be so sensible as one who lives on the spot, and who converses daily with the people, of the utter ruin which this Church would sustain, if it were held, in ecclesiastical affairs, to be subjected to the supremacy of the civil courts. Unless the two jurisdictions are kept apart, our Scottish establishment must fall to pieces. There is now, as in the days of the Covenanters, a very deep conviction, that no religious institution can deserve the name of a Church of Christ, which does not strenuously maintain what used to be the rallying cry of our forefathers—"Christ's kingly government in his Church;"—and, I assure you, that if the clergy were to abandon this ground, they would soon be deserted by their flocks. This may account to you for the firmness and the increasing majorities of our church courts, and for the remarkable exhibition which lately took place in Edinburgh of more than one thousand ministers and elders banding themselves together to support the Church in her present contest.

Let me assure your Lordship, that you could not possibly do any thing that would endear you more to your native land, or would confer on Scotland a greater national blessing, than by giving your hearty support to some liberal measure that may free the Church from the unhallowed trammels of meddling powers from without—whether they be the patrons or the civil courts. You cannot fail to remark the recklessness with which patrons are at present acting, in forcing unacceptable presentees on reclaiming parishes. They are precipitating a crisis, the result of which they are little aware of. Never was there a period when the call for an enlightened and liberal act of the legislature was more imperative. I have the honour to be, my dear Lord, &c.

H. DUNCAN.

Various new measures had been proposed for the adjustment of existing differences, now daily waxing more alarming. Among these, Lord Aberdeen's bill, which the Government seemed disposed to favour, had been the subject of the most frequent and anxious discussion, and hopes were at one time entertained

that by the insertion of certain provisions proposed by Sir George Sinclair, the non-intrusion views of the majority in the church courts might have been carried out; but the result of negotiations on this subject proved unfavourable. Several significant events had also occurred, sufficiently indicating that both parties in the Church were equally resolute—the one to maintain the Crown rights of the Redeemer against the usurping power of the civil courts, the other to drive their brethren, if possible, from the position which they occupied, either by compelling them to renounce their principles, or to retire from the establishment, and thus to leave once more to them and to their Moderate policy, the ascendency which they had for several years regretted, along with the undivided control of church affairs. A considerable defection from the non-intrusion ranks had also taken place, and had formed the party who, from their original number, were popularly called "The Forty." These had been diligently engaged in securing adherents, and in impressing on legislators the belief that the question might be settled satisfactorily to the Church, on a much lower platform than her supreme court had declared her principles would allow. By this most unwarrantable course they had done more to damage the good cause than all her enemies could have effected. The Assembly of 1842 had not on this account indeed yielded a hair's-breadth of the ground already gained, but, on the contrary, had taken a step in advance, declaring, by a large majority, that patronage was "a grievance attended with much injury to religion, and the main cause of the Church's difficulties," deliberately adopting a "Claim of Right and Protest against the encroachments of the civil courts," and condemning any

settlement of the Church's difficulties on grounds inconsistent with the principles expressed in that important document.

The civil actions already mentioned had been followed by a variety of others in succession, each developing more fully the encroaching spirit of the courts of law; until, by a decision given on an appeal to the House of Lords, in August 1842, it at length became the declared law of Scotland, that presbyteries were liable to civil pains and penalties of a very serious kind for carrying out the great principle of Non-intrusion. This brought the affairs of the Church to a crisis. Three courses only now remained, should the law continue to exist as thus interpreted. Either, 1st, To resile from all the steps which had hitherto been so faithfully taken, to own the Church's subjection in spiritual matters to the civil power, and thus to give up every fundamental principle of the constitution for which she had so often struggled since the Reformation; or, 2d, regularly and systematically to break the unconstitutional interdicts and orders of the civil courts in spiritual matters, submitting to any penalties these might in turn impose, at the same time, applying with faithfulness the censures of the Church to disorderly and disobedient ministers and presbyteries; or else, 3d, to throw up all connexion with the state, and, on an open arena, to assert that independence which the British law had declared to be incompatible with such a relation. One alternative, however, still seemed possible, but it belonged to the Legislature, not to the Church. The law of the land might still be altered, and by the recognition of the Church's heaven-derived rights, she might be restored to a condition in which she would be free to follow the dictates of the Word of

God, and to purify herself from those corruptions which still hung over her fair form and marred her beauty.

Under these circumstances, in November 1842, the *Convocation*, as it is historically named, met at Edinburgh. This was an assembly of about five hundred of the clergy, who had hitherto professed non-intrusion principles, convened by some of the most venerable and experienced fathers of the Church, among whom Dr Duncan was one, for the purpose of consulting, in a spirit of brotherly affection, with prayer for divine illumination, what steps it became the Church, at this crisis, to take. Such a meeting has not been often witnessed, either before or since, in any Christian Church. It was of a Millennial character in all its proceedings, breathing a spirit of prayer, and of fraternal love, which was felt to be communicated from on high. The brethren coming together from every county in Scotland, though agreeing in great principles, had, indeed, at first exhibited considerable diversity of sentiment as to the proper way of maintaining these. But light sprung up as the brotherly conference proceeded, and, unlike an ordinary debate from which each party retires more confirmed in former views than ever, this resulted in the dissolution of all separating barriers, and the melting down of every difference in a cordial unanimity. Ere this, indeed, several lukewarm brethren had withdrawn themselves; but when, after their departure, a double series of resolutions had been finally adopted, pledging them to maintain their principles, even though at the loss of their ecclesiastical status and emoluments, a feeling of joy and of gratitude pervaded the brethren which no temporal success could possibly have afforded.

On their return to their several parishes, many of

the brethren addressed their flocks through the press, explaining the critical position to which affairs had now been brought, and pointing out to them the consequences likely to arise. This was a very necessary step. The people in many parts, long accustomed to the existing state of things, had not realised the danger to which their beloved Church was exposed; and their own duties, therefore, in the approaching crisis, had never been rightly apprehended. In a "Letter from the Minister of Ruthwell to his flock, on the Resolutions adopted at the late Convocation," printed and distributed among them, he enters at considerable length into the merits of the controversy—expounds the scriptural argument for the Spiritual Independence of the Church—exhibits the constitutional provisions for maintaining this principle in the Scottish Establishment— and details a variety of cases decided, or in the act of being so, by civil authority, wherein it had been repudiated and outraged, and the Crown Rights of the Redeemer trampled under foot. He concludes, anticipating, almost prophetically, the events of the coming Disruption, as follows:—

We may hold it as certain, judging by the past history of the Church, as well as by the ordinary principles which actuate the human mind, and which are so mysteriously directed by the unseen hand of our Divine Governor, that, should the most faithful of your ministers be forced, by conscience, to renounce a religious Establishment, enslaved and degraded by the usurpation of the Civil Power, a separation would be instantly made between the two great classes of professing Christians. The careless and indifferent would remain behind in the churches of the Establishment, whilst those who valued religion and religious privileges, would go out along with their beloved pastors, and rally round them with an interest not unlike that with which our forefathers followed their persecuted ministers to the retired glen, and the wind-beaten mountain side. Is it

too much to anticipate, as a certain consequence, that, while the virtues and graces of these true-hearted men, as well as of their teachers, would be strengthened by the sacrifices which they made for the sake of their adorable Head, a spirit would, by the blessing of God, be awakened among those who had hitherto cared for none of those things, and, cherished by divine grace, would spread, as it did of old, till its blessed influences might perhaps be felt over the whole mass of society? Thus would the wheat be separated from the chaff; and a new Reformation be effected, not inferior, it may be, to that which renovated the Church of our fathers two centuries before. Among Christ's ministers, indeed, the event would doubtless occasion many painful privations and destroy many earthly hopes; but it would shake their hearts more loose from the cherished things of time, and give them freer scope and warmer zeal in their Master's cause; whilst, among their people, it would light a new and more holy flame, and the unconsumed bush of our beloved Church would burn once more with its early brightness and warmth. Oh! would not this repay, tenfold, our privations and sufferings, while it afforded a new proof of the truth of that blessed promise, so incomprehensible to worldly men, that those who leave houses and lands, and all that is dear to them on earth, for the sake of Christ, shall obtain, even of blessings in the present life, "manifold more" than they have abandoned, as well as, what is infinitely more valuable, "life everlasting in the world to come?"

Glorious prospect! Happy consummation! Oh! if this be the way in which our Heavenly King has decreed that he shall confound the wisdom of the wise, and cause the wrath and the worldly policy of misguided men to praise him, then let the storm burst and the bolt fall! Which of us would not hail our temporal calamities with gratitude, and regard it as all joy that we were counted worthy to suffer in such a cause!

CHAPTER XXVII.

RETROSPECT—PREPARATIONS—LAST SERMON IN THE PARISH CHURCH—DISRUPTION.

HENRY DUNCAN had, from early infancy, been an indulged and favoured child of his Heavenly Father. His manifold blessings had been alloyed with few painful ingredients, and his sorrows had all been singularly mingled with merciful alleviations. His family had grown up without accident or serious evil of any kind, and without a breach. His two sons had voluntarily embraced his own profession, and were settled tranquilly, with their families, in parishes to which they had not only been presented by the lawful patrons, but been called by the unanimous voice of their people; and his only daughter had just been united to a minister of the Church of Scotland, long and intimately known to him, and whose views entirely corresponded with his own. And though thus his children were withdrawn from under his roof, to spheres in every respect so eligible, his home still exhibited its former aspect of affection and of enjoyment; while comforts and blessings seemed destined to follow him to the latest period of old age. In these respects his happy history

seemed now to have reached its culminating point. His health, indeed, as was to be expected, had, for some years, been less certain than formerly; and he had lately visited Leamington for change of scene and medical advice, under an apprehension, probably not justified, that his symptoms proceeded from an affection of the heart; but even this did not materially interfere with his happiness. It was, while matters were drawing rapidly towards the period of the Convocation, that, after his return home from a fatiguing journey, he wrote the following, which, while it lets in a little light on the home circle, will show the zest with which, even while the prospect of demission lay clearly before him, he could recreate himself by indulging his favourite taste for landscape-gardening:—

To the Rev. G. J. C. Duncan, Kirkpatrick-Durham Manse.

Ruthwell Manse, 29th September 1842.

My dear George,—We long to know what you are doing, and how you are, from the oldest to the youngest of you. We have heard almost nothing of you since your return.

Since our arrival at home, on Friday week, we have been much in our usual way, except that the *tire* has never got out of my bones; and, for several days past, I have been troubled with vertigo, a complaint that I hoped I had got the better of by Dr Jephson's prescriptions.

I have been amusing myself, for want of more useful employments, for which I scarcely feel competent at present, by making an alteration in the approach to the house, having taken down the hedge which inclosed the bowling-green along the side of the road, and thrown the bowling-green into the *lawn*, which has led me to carry the road on the other side of Victory,* and through, or rather alongside of the bowling-green. This is a very great improvement, and, when finished, will make the manse "*almost like a gentleman's house!*" †

* A noble tree, which for many years bore that *nom de guerre*.

† Alluding to a family anecdote.

I long to see you and yours, and when you are quite alone, which I suppose you are not at present, will try to muster energy enough to spend a day or two with you. Meanwhile I shall not leave home till G. P. P. and R. L. set off for Madeira, to which place they propose to go about the tenth of next month.

Poor W. M.* is dying. He has been decidedly worse for two or three weeks, and is daily sinking. He is in an interesting state—anxious, and I trust leaning on the right foundation, but with trembling. I feel his case very affecting.

I am calling a meeting of the Parish Bank for the purpose of getting the authority of the depositors to lend some of our funds on heritable security, as you will see by the papers, and I am sending printed circulars to them.

* * * *

I am, very affectionately yours,

H. DUNCAN.

It may seem strange to be told that the quiet and regular fulfilment of the ordinary occupations of the house, the grounds, and the glebe, indicated by this letter, were scarce disturbed by the evident approach of the crisis. The month of November, as we have seen, brought the Convocation. Winter and spring were employed in active efforts to enlighten the people on the principles for which their pastor was so soon to suffer the loss of all things; but the fields were ploughed and sown without altering the rotation of a single crop, and even the garden, under the charge of James Veitch, who took as warm an interest in these affairs as his master, was nearly as carefully tilled as in former years. The members of his family sometimes expressed surprise that he should not make some alteration in his plans; but he seemed desirous not unnecessarily to disturb the long accustomed course of affairs in a house which had to him always borne some

* A faithful servant since 1817.

of the features of an earthly paradise. He did not the less, however, look prudently forward to the event which he believed to be so near. For some time it had been an object of earnest desire with him to establish in Dumfries a newspaper, advocating the principles for which the Church was contending. Hitherto, however, his proposals had met with little encouragement; but, at a crisis so important, he saw more clearly than ever the infinite moment of having a popular organ for diffusing sound information over the district. In the beginning of 1843, by the concurrence of most of the ministers of the neighbourhood favourable to the Church's views, and of several laymen, the *Dumfries Standard* was launched into existence. Its earliest numbers, before the appointment of an editor, were, in a great degree, indebted to his superintendence and contributions, seconded by the able assistance of his brethren; and he had the satisfaction, ere long, of seeing this new production, the third journal which he had been instrumental, on public grounds, in promoting at Dumfries, become a successful candidate for public favour, as well as an efficient ally of the friends of truth and righteousness, as it still continues to be, in the south of Scotland. Nor did he neglect to make provision for the impending necessities of his congregation. Believing that it would be impossible to procure standing room for them, when *outed*, on any suitable locality within his own parish, he had selected a spot on its border which, though inconvenient for many of the people, was otherwise well adapted for the purposes of worship, and which he did not doubt would, on application to the proprietor, be obtained; and he began to circulate, by means of well selected collectors, subscription papers, to ascertain the amount

on which he might calculate as their contribution to the "Central Sustentation Fund," which had already been organized.

The proceedings of the Moderate party were not of a character to indicate their belief that the slightest probability existed of the Government's yielding to the wishes of their opponents. They were doubtless generally aware of the statements—absurd, uncharitable, and unfounded as they were—which had been made to men in power by some of themselves, to the effect that hardly more than six or eight of the Non-Intrusionists would adhere to their principles in the day of trial, and they sought to realize, by vigorous proceedings, the result thus rashly foretold. One object which, with this view, they diligently prosecuted, was to mould the character of the Assembly now about to meet, so as to secure a majority, and give the appearance of reaction. Though they knew that this attempt would be hopeless if the Church were left free to elect her own representatives, they did not, on this account, despair. With the Court of Session to assist them, there were appliances at their disposal, which, under other circumstances, would not have been available, and a pretext for coercion was found in many Presbyteries, arising from the alleged illegality of a late Act of Assembly, admitting the ministers of *quoad sacra* churches as constituent members of these courts. On the plea that the election of representatives by presbyteries, in which such members were allowed to vote, was illegal, interdicts were freely granted by the Civil Courts, under severe penalties, debarring such elections, and forbidding those who might be thus chosen to take their seats in the Supreme Judicatory. The Assembly, therefore, could not be held as a Free Ge-

neral Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Nothing now seemed to remain for that Church, thus arbitrarily deprived of privileges which her Fathers and Reformers had died to secure, except to follow the path which, six months before, the Convocation had deliberately indicated, by relinquishing her union with a State whose civil courts seemed bent on annihilating her dearest rights, and which had hitherto refused to grant her the smallest measure of protection.

Notwithstanding these decisive appearances, a hope continued to be cherished in the minds of some sanguine friends of the Church, that the legislature would yet interfere on her behalf. This, however, arose rather from their confidence in the wisdom of a paternal government, than from any intimation of a friendly intention; and thus, amid conflicting hopes and fears, arrived the 18th day of May. "At last came the deciding time," says the Family MS. already quoted, "the Assembly of 1843. Dr Duncan was a member. The period seemed perilous; small things were noted with unusual observance. As we crossed the grounds rendered so beautiful by his taste and skill, on our way to church on the Sabbath morning before the Assembly, to our astonishment we found the sun-dial overturned. No part of it was broken but the stile. 'You will never more point your people to the Sun of Righteousness in Ruthwell Church,' remarked a member of the family by his side. 'Very likely,' was his quiet reply. When we had gone a little further we found a large and flourishing evergreen torn up by the roots, and saw our neighbour's herd of cattle before us, which had broken into the garden. 'Will you say next that old James is not to work again in this garden?' asked one. 'Most likely,' was the

answer. We entered the dear old church with solemn thoughts, and heard him preach a sermon on 'Christ a Priest upon his Throne,' in which he bore his last testimony in that place, to the priestly and kingly offices of his Divine Redeemer.

"Dr Duncan had no sooner departed to attend the Assembly, than a petition was got up amongst the people to entreat him not to forsake them. They thought that as he had been presented by a patron, *their call* on him thus to remain would turn his, at least, into a popular settlement. It was believed to be urged on under the influence of a neighbouring minister, who having turned back himself would have been glad of countenance. Many of the flock signed the petition, unable to take a wider range of vision than to see the hope that this plan might detain their old shepherd among them. Some, however, refused to sign it, and some few said if Dr D. granted that petition they would never hear him more. In the midst of that week of many emotions was that petition received by him, and the answer sent from Edinburgh. Neither petition nor answer are just now at hand. The reply was rather brief, expressing surprise and disappointment, that after all his efforts to enlighten them, they should not see that not only his duty but theirs was to quit the Establishment, which secular legal encroachment had rendered no longer 'the Church of our fathers.'"

The following letter was written on the morning of the eventful day:—

To Mrs Duncan, Ruthwell.

Edinburgh, 18th May 1843.

My dearest M——, I am waiting for George John to go with me to the Commissioner's levee, and commence this with

a view of finishing it when I best can. I received yours by the same post with the communication of parishioners, the subscriptions to which I have not yet read over. It is well meant, although very injudicious; and I am sorry to see that there are so many who have so little apprehension of the real merits of the question, or of the position which I have conscientiously taken up. I am glad that they have said "if consistent." That enables me to show them why it is not consistent; but this will be best done by making them acquainted with the admirable protest which is to be presented to-day to the Assembly.

I am delighted and amused with B—— G——. He need not be afraid that my feelings are hurt. The petition will do good, and I am glad that I shall have an opportunity of answering it. I shall get nothing, however, done in that way, I fear, till to-morrow, for on this eventful day I can scarcely be absent. My impression is, that a meeting should be called in church on Sabbath evening, and my letter to my parishioners, which I will send by Annan on Saturday, be then read along with the protest. Perhaps J—— P—— will read them, unless R—— be come, which I do trust he is. I shall write my letter in the tone of a Sabbath communication, so that you need not fear you will secularise the Sabbath by it.

A noble spirit prevails among us all. We are of one heart and one soul; and what will occur this day, will strike to the heart of Scotland, and rouse her Presbyterianism.

I am very well, and am surprised with how little fatigue I go through my duties. Mr Bonar has consented, after a day's deliberation, to preach in the *tent*, on the site of the new church, on Sabbath week. Handbills should be issued and widely circulated, and the whins removed. I have given Hector instructions about the tent, which I hope will be executed. There will be a place for our family *below the tent*.* But I must conclude for the present. If time will allow, I will write what occurs in the course of the day.

I shall not here attempt to paint the scene of the Disruption, which has been already so often and so

* The *tent* did not provide shelter for the congregation, as its name may seem to indicate. It was merely intended as a pulpit, enclosed on every side except the one from which the minister addressed them, and sufficiently elevated to admit of a small chamber beneath it, in which a few seats could be placed.

well depicted by abler hands; the brilliant levee of the Royal Commissioner in Holyrood—the military procession to Church—the faithful sermon of Dr Welsh, the Moderator, on the well-chosen text, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind"—the crowding of St Andrew's Church, used for the time as the Assembly Hall—the awe-struck and expectant aspect of the multitude within and without—the solemn but stern earnestness of the Moderator on reading his Protest, which was that also of one hundred and ninety-three members, against the encroachment of the civil power—the rising of more than one-half of the elected representatives of the Church—their calm unfaltering retirement, and their solemn procession, in comely order, from a sanctuary which they felt to be polluted to a lowlier but freer arena—the deeply interested multitude—the thronged windows—the peopled roofs—the waving handkerchiefs, steeped in tears, have often been described. One feature alone I have never seen mentioned, and that the deepest touch of all, showing that earnest solemnity and the spirit of prayer had its place in the gazing throng. There were hats raised from venerable heads, and words such as these dropt into the ears of the passing ministers—"The Lord be with you!" "God guide you!" "May He strengthen you and bear you through!" And those who heard them *were* strengthened. All this is now matter of history, and already, long before the usual time, history is doing justice to the movement. The world then saw four hundred and seventy-four ministers out of about twelve hundred, who constituted the clergy of the Church of Scotland, renouncing the dignity of their Establishment, and the comforts of their endow-

ments, and, for Christ's cause and the Gospel, going forth "without the camp bearing His reproach."

"Often during the time that elapsed between the Convocation and the Assembly," continues the MS., "had his eye been cast over the parish in search of a site for a Free church; but being hopeless of obtaining one within reach of the mass of the people, he turned to the border on the Mousewald side, and calculated that, failing all other places, he was sure of a site on the property of the late Mr Morrison, and now, by marriage, in possession of the Rev. Dr James Buchanan. Feeling that the old Church could no longer be used by us, he wrote from Edinburgh to request standing room on the farm of Mr N——; and on the second Sabbath of that Assembly, the Rev. Horatius Bonar preached on the green hill-side, to between two and three thousand people. Vehicles of many descriptions were there from great distances. Solemnity, curiosity, and anxiety seemed to mingle among the feelings of the crowd. They expected to hear much of church affairs, but it was too good an opportunity for preaching the everlasting gospel, for Mr Bonar to squander it on such secondary things. The 'Plant of Renown' was his subject; and I have heard of some who say, that in eternity they will bless the Lord for having heard the Plant described that day."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RETURN TO RUTHWELL—LABOURS AND CHARACTERISTICS—LEAVING THE MANSE.

DR DUNCAN returned from Edinburgh, to prepare for occupying his new position, with a heart full of joy and gratitude. His faith, if it had needed outward circumstances to fortify it, might have found this in the cordiality with which the inmates of his house, and all the members of his family, concurred in the principles for which he was now testifying. He was prepared, indeed, to find a portion of his flock more than lukewarm in the cause he had espoused; for having long lamented the prevalence of a spirit of drowsy worldliness among them, he fully expected that this would now come prominently to light, preventing some from understanding the Headship of the Redeemer, and causing others to shrink from the sacrifices which the rising institute could not but demand. Yet he knew that many of the most hopeful of his people were cordially at one with him; and he had the satisfaction of reflecting, that the more searching the test of their sincerity, the more thoroughly satisfactory was their adherence likely to be found. There were, indeed, in the case of Ruthwell, several peculiar discourage-

ments. So dissatisfied were the landed proprietors generally understood to be with the movement, that, as we have seen, he had thought it useless to solicit a site for his church within the parish; and this of itself had, perhaps a powerful effect, on that proportion of a rural community, who seem to cherish it almost as a principle of daily action to "please the laird." Then, the inconvenient distance of the Free Church site, from the bulk of the population, offered another obstruction to the lukewarm and inactive; so that when we add these to the objections, which many could not conceal, to joining a cause which seemed to demand a considerable amount of self-denial and pecuniary contribution, it is not, perhaps, surprising that many were content to stand aloof and look with wonder, but without sympathy, on this marvellous movement. Hearty were the band who welcomed back their pastor from the scene of his testimony, and deeper than before was the interest and the love with which they flocked around him to hear the tidings he brought. Efforts were now set on foot for the erection of the church; and a spirit of rising activity among the people, was marked likewise by a spirit of rising devotion. Of this period, and that which follows, the MS. thus speaks:—

"With regard to those who adhered to the old walls, not above three families did so, from whom Dr Duncan hoped for more enlightened conduct, and one or two single persons. He felt that he had not only the 'salt' with him, but most of those who were promising, or beginning to think; and several of those who had been clinging feebly to the Saviour before, got a view then that religion is a real thing, and made a step in

advance in the divine life, which it is hoped they will never lose.

"As to liberality, we knew what a poor people we dwelt amongst. The way had been, in times past, that they were the receivers, their minister the giver. Yet he told them that, before the assessment for the poor, they used to collect in church about L.25 annually. He thought they could turn their halfpence into pence, without feeling it much, and that would make L 50. Beyond this he did not expect them to go. So that their liberality in collecting, not only for sustentation, but for all the Church's missions, and for the building scheme, agreeably surprised him. One difficulty removed was, that having in April, in prospect of the event, given up the use of his phaeton because of the tax, one of his brothers presented him with a little conveyance below the value that is taxable. As he could not walk to our tent and preaching ground, this was a most opportune and useful gift. He set about erecting our church immediately; and the first stormy Sabbath that we had, after we had become houseless, we were enabled to sit under the new roof on planks, and thankfully to bless the Lord for shelter, while the wind beat the rain against the windows. This was in October. Before that we had sometimes cloudy skies, that led us to pray more for weather tempered to our circumstances than ever we had done before; and in one instance we had so tempestuous a morning that we feared it would be impossible to meet. The storm became a calm in good time, and as we set out for the Sabbath school opened in Mousewald, and on the second day occupied by upward of seventy children, the sun shone out. When

church time came, the wind had dried even the turf on which we sat, and many enjoyed the word of life the more, that our comfortable position in hearing it, was thankfully acknowledged as an answer to prayer.

"The flock consisted of many stragglers from the nearest parishes, but its staple was the people of Ruthwell. About half of the church-going population came out; and there was a uniting bond of Christian love that knit us more together than in all former years. We felt strong in the Lord and in each other, and if there were feelings of displeasure or division in any other family, in the minister's no such thing was experienced."

In November, immediately after the Disruption, he attended the General Assembly which met in Glasgow, and expressed, in his correspondence, the satisfaction and gratitude he felt in witnessing the wisdom and harmony of that delightful meeting. His object here, however, was not merely to join in deliberations, having the general good of the Church in view. He was anxiously inquiring after preachers and ministers to occupy spheres, now demanding such labourers within his own presbytery, such as Ecclefechan, Lockerby, and Annan. The last of these places had, for many years, been an object of lively interest to himself. He had, with some Christian friends, exerted himself earnestly and successfully in procuring the erection of an additional church, in connexion with the Establishment, in that town, to which a parish *quoad sacra* had been attached by the Assembly, and a minister appointed. When funds were low he had joined in advancing several hundred pounds on the security of the property, which was vested in the lenders, till they should be repaid; and, as the money for the

erection had been subscribed in great measure by persons of non-intrusion principles, who were now out of the Establishment, and especially as the majority of the congregation meeting in it were attached to the Free Church, it would have been no breach of equity if the building had been allowed to lapse into the legal possession of the retiring party, on payment of the subscriptions of such as still remained in the Establishment. On the law of the question he had, in Glasgow, been taking advice, and he shows his opinion of the zeal of the Moderate party when he says—"From any thing I can as yet hear, our course is quite clear, and nothing but the payment of our advances can take the new Church out of our hands. *This, I think, the Residuaries will not do.*" In this, however, he was ultimately disappointed. He had not calculated how vigorous moderatism can become when tangible property is in the case, even when that property is a church which must be locked up, as the one in question has since for the most part been, for want of a congregation.

The spirit of violence and rancour with which the Free Church was often most unreasonably and unjustly charged, certainly had no place in the heart of the minister of Ruthwell. The calm and hallowed assurance that the hand which had led him to take the place he now occupied was that of God, who was thus honouring him to bear a testimony for Himself, repressed effectually such embittered emotions, and enabled him to cast his eye over every family of his former flock, now separated from his ministry, without one sentiment inconsistent with the kindest good-will, and the heartiest desire, still to do them all the service in his power.

"As time rolled on," continues the MS., "the necessities of some of those who had been most angry against us, led them to seek help from their old friend. It was curious to observe, that if there was any change in his demeanour at all, it was visible in an increased desire to do them service. One small incident—a type of what I mean—will explain the whole.

"A family were bereaved of one of their little ones. Whether it was that there being no parish minister, they thought it would not be decent not to have one at all, or whether some better feeling dictated the act, I know not; but, in spite of many unkind motives imputed to the ministers who had demitted, and such sayings as we have all heard of, the father asked Dr Duncan to attend the funeral. His prayer had been so full of love for those who divided from his ministry, though the objects of his earnest care for years, that some of the women, unable to contain themselves, rushed out of the house and wept it out together with their Free Church friends. The day was hot, and the churchyard at some distance. Dr Duncan offered to place the remains of the little one in his small gig; and, after some difficulty about the adjustment, he agreed to walk while they took their way to the grave. So simple an act was this with him, that he never recollected to mention it, though he came straight from the scene; nor did we hear of it till some days after, when we found the village still in a move about it. Even the Free Church wives, who thought he should not have accepted the invitation, and the Bound Church wives, who thought he should not have been invited, were agreed at least in this, that their old friend was their old friend still, and bore the same Christian heart to them all."

One happy result of the Disruption became apparent.

in the course of Dr Duncan's dis-established ministry. Hitherto, the strictness of clerical etiquette had confined him within the limits of his own parish. Many a summer's evening had he spent in preaching to such as were brought by circumstances within the range of his parochial ministry, though not inhabitants of Ruthwell. On the sea-shore he had had for a time a regular congregation, partly composed of such strangers —labourers engaged on the spot in rearing an embankment—who, when their tools were laid aside at the close of the day, used to gather around his phaeton, from which he addressed to them the message of salvation. Still he had often had cause to regret, when openings of usefulness presented themselves beyond his own boundaries, that he was precluded by the recognised rules of ministerial intercourse from taking advantage of them. Now, however, he was set free from old restraints, and with hearty good-will he took the opportunity of carrying his message beyond the boundaries of Ruthwell, wherever, in the neighbourhood, he was so happy as to find an open door. The parish minister of forty-three years, became at once the Gospel missionary.

"Though in his seventieth year," I quote from the same document, "he went every alternate Sabbath evening many miles along the shores of the Solway, to preach in the open air, to about two hundred people, in Caerlaverock parish. In Mousewald, and Dalton too, he often preached, and in each of these latter parishes we got a Sabbath-school placed, so that though a portion of his stated flock left him, he had by the disruption, means of searching out others who were not '*Gospel-hardened*,' and some of whom received the good news gladly.

"We were not able to leave the manse to its empti-

ness for some time. Indeed, as the patron let slip the time, and either forgot, or did not choose to exercise his privilege of presenting to the Church, so that it fell into the hands of the presbytery, we might have had means to prolong our stay. There was no house, either in or out of the parish where we could find shelter, and it seemed likely that we might be forced to go to Dumfries or Annan, quite away from all the dear people. However, the heart of an old neighbour was at last inclined to give her old minister shelter; and though no Free Church woman, she packed herself up in one end of her cottage, and allowed us to pay a rent for the other, which we were very thankful to do, though the accommodation was small and very inconvenient for her and for us."

This cottage was the same which had been built, as mentioned in one of the early chapters, for Mrs Craig, and in which he had himself resided on his first arrival in the parish, and it was here that he contracted his first marriage. There were, in fact, many memories hanging round the spot—not only of an early, but of a recent date—for it had subsequently been successively occupied for longer or shorter periods by dear friends, whose intercourse had gladdened and cheered the comparative solitude of Ruthwell. The cottage stands on a knoll, at the eastern end of the village of Clarencefield—a little to the north of the highway. The front commands a view of the Solway, which, at low water, stretches its sands for many miles seaward, and the lofty mountains of Cumberland shut in the view. A low hedge circles the little green before the door, and roses and honey-suckles gather round the windows. The place, though contracted, and not in good repair, was by no means abject, and with cheerful

hearts the inmates of the manse availed themselves of its shelter. The narrative proceeds: —

"The dear pastor's feelings were very keen, though his natural mildness kept them all quiet, and his trust in divine goodness restrained them. But it was persons, not things that he felt about. It was not his old church or manse, but his people who staid behind, that gave him pain.

"The evening before our removal, his oldest son and two little grandsons came to look again at the birth-place of the one, and a scene which he desired the other two to remember, if they should live to be old. On the next day we had agreed to meet and eat our last meal, at mid-day, in the dear old parlour which had been the scene of forty years hospitality and kindness. But Dr Duncan and his son had gone to look after the workmen at the rising church. Noon, one, two, three o'clock, passed—we were in despair. It would be night at last. The people who were working having settled it that he could not bear to take leave of the house, and would not return; we dined without them, and the last chair was placed on the cart when they returned to the door of the dismantled house, cheerful and hungry. A message from a sick man had drawn them to Collin, a distance of seven miles, and little occupied about where or how he should be lodged, he had pursued his ministerial work as if no removal were in the way. Yet he was bent on making the best of our discomforts. Next morning, when he found rain pouring down the wall of our pantry, he disappeared, and returned after a long absence, wet and muddy, with the keys of the manse in one hand, and a bit of lead in the other. He remembered to have seen it among the rubbish in

the garret, and had returned to the home of his early happiness to procure this bit of lead to try to stop the hole which was adding to the inconveniences of our new abode. We smiled at the incident as proving how far they were mistaken, who thought he indulged in any thing like sentimental sorrow for what he had resigned. Sure I am that his energy never was greater, his youth seemed to be renewed—his labours were more abundant, and when he returned late and cold in the little open gig from distant prayer-meetings during that severe winter, he never allowed us to express any concern, as if he were doing any thing beyond his strength."

The new abode began to assume under his plastic hand a more tasteful aspect. He had brought with him a few cart-loads of old roots from the hermitage at the manse, which, with the help of old James, he had piled into a fantastic heap, covered with flowers and shrubs, to secure a certain degree of privacy from the eye of highway passengers. That faithful servant having remained with him, now united the duties of groom to those of gardener, and still, notwithstanding his diminished vigour, found his service sufficiently light. Rejoicing to be occupied in his old employments, he had planted shrubs and flowers wherever they were needed to give beauty to the spot, and the cottage seemed to smile with gratitude for the attention.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CORRESPONDENCE—A SECOND REMOVAL—LEGAL EQUITY!—A THIRD REMOVAL.

Dr Duncan's correspondence was cheerful and joyous as ever. No shade of sorrow, except indeed for his too-limited success in winning souls to Christ, seemed to rest on his mind; and if petty annoyances and obstructions made him grieve, it was more for those who caused them, than for himself. The following letters give some idea of his position, and his feelings, when parochial affairs had become somewhat settled in their new channels:—

To the Rev. W. Wallace Duncan, Peebles.

Clarence Cottage, March 26, 1844.

My dear Wallace,

* * * * *

I have now a few minutes to spare, before going out to visit some sick people, and I begin this letter to you that I may fix myself down to answer you to-day, though I am not quite well.

We have had a pleasant Communion season, and there were one hundred and fifteen communicants—about the same number that there were on the last occasion—although, being in the house (which was quite full), we had many fewer strangers. Mr Bonar did much duty. He preached every evening, chiefly in Clarencefield schoolhouse, besides frequently through the day; and I would gladly hope some good impression has at least been begun among our sleepy population. The school-

house was overflowing every night, and the people eagerly listened. God grant that an awakening may take place among us, although it may not please the Great Head of the Church to make me the instrument of it. He knows best whom to employ, and although it is most heart-breaking to think that I should be made to feel myself cast aside, yet I trust I can truly say, "Nevertheless, therein I do rejoice, yea and will rejoice." O, if souls be saved, by whatever instrumentality, have I not reason?

The elevation of your church, of which you send me a hand-sketch, is very nice, but I think the centre should project a few feet beyond the two side-roofs and compartments, which would not only give elegance to the elevation outside, but add also, if properly managed, to the beauty of the construction within.

To the Rev. G. J. C. Duncan, North Shields.

Clarence Cottage, 7th January, 1845.

My dear George,—I return you and yours most affectionately all the good wishes of the season, in which my *better half* most sincerely joins. Yours is before me, and I shall answer it *seriatim*, that I may omit none of your inquiries or observations, which seem to require notice.

It is true that we have been forced to abandon the schoolhouse* by the manœuvres of —— and the obsequiousness of ——; but this gives us no uneasiness, for the masons' lodge, which they cannot meddle with, is large enough for all ordinary occasions, being capable, when properly seated, of holding about sixty people, and being warmer and snugger than the schoolroom. An attempt is also making to shut us out of the schoolhouse built by me with the Surplus Fund of the Parish Bank, but I rather think we shall be able to defeat this attempt. Meanwhile it is not to the credit of the parties.

I am happy to say that we have secured in Mr Brown an assistant every way to my mind. * * * *

I feel deeply for the destitution of the Newcastle Presbyterians, and do hope that they will soon get an additional minister according to their mind, and, what is far better,

* The parish schoolhouse of Ruthwell does not properly belong to the Establishment; and it was hoped by the Free Church party that its use might have still been enjoyed for religious exercises as formerly.

according to the mind of our Great Head. I have some thoughts of putting an extract from your letter on the subject into the *Standard* when I can find time to transcribe it, as it may possibly do good.

I wish I could say more of the success of the Gospel among my flock, although I trust some good is doing. At least we have numerous "irons in the fire." We have a good schoolmaster and catechist—Mr Brydon—who has nearly fifty scholars, and I think will get more. * * * *

With Mr Brown's assistance and his we have, besides regular service at Mount Kedar, either two or three prayer meetings in the course of the week—a week-day evening class for religious instruction in Ruthwell village—at Clarence Cottage—at Mount Kedar—and in Mousewald village. Mrs Duncan conducts that in Ruthwell village—Mr Brown at Mount Kedar—Mr Brydon at Mousewald village—and I myself at Clarence cottage. The classes are well attended, and I trust good is doing.

I am glad that you were able to procure justice for the Presbyterian soldiers in your neighbourhood. It is well that there are some influential persons at head-quarters who have good sense enough—I wish we had grounds to say religious principle—to allow of liberty of conscience.

The progress of Puseyism is fearful. Have you seen the Bishop of Exeter's Confession of Faith in vindicating himself from the charge of Tractarianism? The necessity of the sacraments to salvation—the new birth in baptism—the actual communication of the material body and blood of Christ in the Supper—the apostolic succession—the want of any covenanted promise of salvation to those who are not in communion with *the* Church, *i. e.*, the Church of England—these and other revolting doctrines are openly avowed and gloried in by him! And is this a minister of the Church of Christ? It is painful to see what a pother is made about a few childish and unmeaning outward forms, while not a voice is raised within the English establishment, at least in public controversy, against such vital errors.

I was preaching at Ecclefechan yesterday, while Mr Brown preached at Mount Kedar to upwards of one hundred and fifty children belonging to the Free Church, and distributed bibles, as is usual, on the first Sabbath of the year. My successor was

engaged in the same way at the Established Church, but what were his numbers I do not know. At the suggestion of his Sabbath-school teachers, we were offered part of Lord ——'s annual donation of L.5, but the minister clogged the offer with a condition which he knew would not be complied with —that we should send our children to his Church to receive the bibles. Fortunately we had between L.3 and L.4 of a balance in our hands, which made us less regret the successful but clumsy expedient by which we were deprived of the intended assistance.

Give my kindest love to dear B—— and the *bairns*. May God watch over you and yours, prays your very affectionate

HENRY DUNCAN.

His own ministrations, conducted with more zeal than ever, but under the disadvantage frequently lamented, of decaying strength, were not destitute of tokens for good. To Mrs Duncan, who was for a season absent, he wrote thus in February 1845:—

* * * *

My tiredness to-night arises chiefly from the arrangement of the parish library books for the Friday's class, and my exertion in teaching. There were nineteen present to-night. * * * Our teachers' meeting went well off, and I think we shall have comfort in continuing it.

I am delighted to say that —— is giving symptoms of a change of heart. His father first mentioned it to me with fear and trembling. He was afraid of his mind giving way as he seemed to be moping and losing his appetite, while he retired from company and read tracts, which he had got from J. T. I told him I was delighted to hear it; and assured him that all would be well, and I requested him to send —— to me that I might converse with him. The dear lad was sent with an errand on Friday—not knowing that his father had contrived the errand to bring us into contact. I had a very interesting conversation with him of an hour and a half, and found him much more communicative and cheerful than I expected. Only two or three times he was silent, when I put some home question relative to the state of his soul; and when I looked in his face I observed him ready to burst into tears. He seems to

have been delighted with his visit, and his mother tells me he has resumed his usual cheerfulness, and speaks of the interview with much animation. Poor boy! I shall watch over him with tender care as a father over a beloved son. One proof of an awakened conscience, his father told me with some apprehension: He is attending a singing school at Mount Kedar,* and he came home sooner than his brother. When asked the reason he replied, "I was not going to hear *songs* in the Kirk." The truth is, he bolted off as soon as the sacred music was over.

* * * I hope all may tend to promote the spiritual good of my dear flock, which are becoming daily more dear to me. What is the reason that I can never allude to the "lambs of my flock" without a faltering voice? Yesterday I thought I should have fairly made a fool of myself when, in my concluding address, I said a few words to them as spectators.

But in the midst of these labours a new removal was at hand. The circumstances are thus described:—

"At last, after the second winter, it became necessary that we should remove, on very short notice, from the cottage which had given us this welcome shelter. By that time the church was finished, and the school and the schoolmaster's house were nearly so; but a manse was the last thing he thought of, and we were at our wits' end. We had the offer of rooms in a farm-house, and used to say to each other, that our Father knew we could not, in our climate, live by the hedge side. But we felt much at a loss, and having looked all around for help in vain, we had committed it to Him and waited for direction. We had promised to remove on the 1st of May. It wanted full four days of that time, and was Saturday night. Dr Duncan was called to hear the will of an old lady read, whose death produced some changes. At eight o'clock he came in and said—'We are to have a house to cover

* The name given to the site of the Free Church of Ruthwell.

us. W. B. is to remove into the large house, and on Tuesday, at noon, we may begin to clear his cottage.' I do not stop to tell that it was damp, part of it unceiled, and very smoky. There were as many people glad for us, and we were ourselves as filled with thankfulness as if we had found a palace. We saw that we had been left to the last moment that we might discern more clearly the hand that provided. It seemed far more the people's concern than our first removal. They came and cleaned, and scrubbed, and carried, and by midday on the first of May we were removed into our new resting-place. None, of all who helped us on that occasion, would receive any thing for their labour. Indeed we felt that this little event of the cottage drew into light more love than all that had preceded it. Among other marks of this, a man who had a field behind our house, without saying any thing about it, opened the hedge and put in a gate, so that we could walk in a very pleasant place; and often escaped from the smoke of the house to the green field, with its grassy knolls and little ponds, and with its wild roses and honeysuckles; and there, with our books, we were as happy as we could have been in the garden, whose every graceful nook was endeared to us."

This new abode was decidedly and in every respect inferior to the one they had left. Within a few yards of the highway, but on a lower level, it was entirely exposed to the dust of the road and the eyes of passengers. A little garden, or "kale yard," attached to it on one side, afforded a few vegetables for the table, but added no attractions of taste or beauty; while on the other a road or cart-track led close past the windows. Nothing appeared more hopeless than to at-

tempt improvement in the aspect of a dwelling so bare and incapable. Yet a few weeks wrought a change almost like magic. The roots, no longer desired or needed where they had been formerly deposited, were brought down to the new cottage and piled in a fantastic barricade between the front and the road; a neat gateway admitted the visiter to the door, and a parterre of shrubs and evergreens, mingled with flowers, helped to make one forget that so lately the spot was both exposed and unsightly; so that what with the retirement afforded by the neighbouring field, and the occupations incident on these improvements, he felt the change of place far less than many would have supposed possible. At the beginning of these characteristic employments he still possessed the willing aid of old James Veitch, whose ardour in seconding and carrying out his master's wishes never flagged. That faithful servant died at his post. Overheated one day by labour, plied with more animation and zeal than his strength could endure, he was attacked by inflammation, which in a few days terminated his life. A bond which had existed for nearly half a century, was thus broken, and it will not be doubted that the event was painfully felt by Dr Duncan, who with the kindly regrets of a sincere mourner, laid the head of his faithful and attached servant in the grave. He lies not many yards from the spot which afterwards received his master. Their dust mingles hard by the wall that separates the churchyard from the garden, in which both servant and master had together, for forty-three years, enjoyed as much innocent happiness as the cultivation of a taste for nature—singularly strong in both—could easily afford.

It was cheering to the friends who visited him in

his new house to observe his perfect contentment with the circumstances in which he now found himself.

"Many an expression of thankfulness for comforts," continues the MS., "did he utter, and many of gladness about the growth and prosperity of the Free Church, but never one of regret. Indeed his spirits were enlivened, and he was aroused, in an unexpected degree, from the taciturnity that advancing years had been drawing on him, so that we often remarked it. In one of his walks in the field, that he enjoyed so much, he said to his daughter, who had come to visit him with her husband, Mr Dodds (also a minister who had resigned his living), 'They talk of sacrifices. I never can feel that I have made any. I never was more happy. I have all that my necessities require; and the only thing that could have made me unhappy would have been to act contrary to my conviction of duty.' I have dwelt more on this point than may seem necessary, led to it by a fear that many, who would not believe that the ministers would *come out* of the Establishment, still persist in saying that they only *remain out because they cannot get in again.*"

The hand of persecution was never permitted to fall upon Dr Duncan or his flock, as it did on some of the Free Church ministers and people in other parts of Scotland; but the enmity that prevailed in the breasts of a few who had the power, was shown in the paltry obstructions, and pitiful oppositions, which they threw in his way. Some of these are too trifling to be noticed, except as illustrative of the spirit of the time; and it is but justice to the resident population of Ruthwell to remark, that it is not to them that any of these painful reflections attach. On the contrary, with hardly an exception, they displayed a friendly dispo-

sition, and in many cases assisted their old minister in carrying forward the works necessary for completing the Free Church establishment on the site which had been obtained, and many were the loads of stones and timber laid down freely by some of those who had declined to follow him.

There were others, however, who acted a very different part, and one instance of the kind, faithfulness forbids us to omit.

It will be recollected that the surplus fund of the parish bank, which should have fallen to himself to defray the expenses of management, had been appropriated to the erection of a schoolhouse in a distant corner of the parish, as a humble but suitable memorial of the "Parent Institution." It stood upon a patch of ground within a scraggy plantation, on the edge of a moss, the site having been obtained gratuitously from the proprietor. It contained not only a commodious room for the children, but a suitable dwelling for the teacher, who was admitted to it from his miserable sheiling without any stipulation, except a verbal one, that he should be removable at pleasure. Over the entrance a neatly carved stone intimated the history of the erection; which, modest but suitable and commodious, was remarked by passing strangers as an object of interest in a locality with whose aspect and condition it was in tasteful harmony. Dr Duncan alludes to this schoolhouse, in one of the letters inserted a few pages farther back, and what follows will show that his hopes there expressed were too sanguine.

Shortly before the Disruption, the property to which the site had belonged changed hands, reverting to the representatives of a former proprietor. Though

non-resident they could not but hear of the prayer-meetings, the Sabbath-school, and the sermons, for which the schoolhouse was habitually employed; and a trifling informality in the title-deed, which it was never pretended could affect a bona fide claim in equity, was made an occasion to wrest the property out of Dr Duncan's hands. The pretext was that the last possessor still owed a portion of the money of the old purchase, but the claim itself rested on the merest technicality. Had a yearly shilling, or even a peppercorn, been named as feu-duty (or land-tax), its validity could not have been questioned; but this had unfortunately been omitted, and accordingly he and the schoolmaster were ordered immediately to cease occupation of the schoolhouse. So startling an attempt he could not at first believe possible, but he was soon undeceived. His appeal to their justice was met by a reference to their legal agent, and an assurance that the views of the proprietors would be carried out in a "temperate and courteous, yet *firm* manner." The agent of course had nothing to do with equity. His concern was merely to establish the right of his clients; and he had "neither the power nor the inclination to offer any terms whatever of compromise." To him, therefore, any representation, except one founded on statutes and precedents, was vain; but from the proprietors he did expect to meet with some attention to other considerations. In a second letter to one of them who acted for the rest, Dr Duncan says—

I had two objects in view in the erection: first, the accommodation of the schoolmaster and scholars of that isolated district; and next, the opportunity of religious instruction by a Sabbath-school, and by occasional religious services. Ever since it was opened it has been used for all these purposes to a greater or less extent, as circumstances admitted, and especially of late

years; an increasing sense of duty, as regards the spiritual welfare of that district, having grown upon me.

Now, my dear sir, allow me to say, that my having, from conscientious motives, thrown up the *emoluments* of the Established Church, does not, in my opinion, materially alter my duty in this respect. I have not thrown up my clerical character, nor divested myself of the intimate and solemn relation towards my people imposed upon me by my ordination vows, and endeared and strengthened by the labours of nearly half a century. They may break the bond between us by deserting me, but I will not desert them. I did flatter myself that, if there was a place in the parish to which I should be cheerfully welcomed by all classes, it would be this schoolhouse, a building planned by my regard for the best interests of the district, and erected, I may say, at my own expense.

I never had the slightest intention of interfering, in any respect, with the school or the teacher. So far from it, that, at the teacher's solicitation, I have made repairs on the place since the Disruption; but my wish is to have free access to the building—not at school hours—to hold prayer-meetings occasionally for the religious edification of those who choose to attend, either by myself or by any other person I may appoint. This, one would think, is a small boon; but it is one on which I place a high value, anxious as I am for the spiritual welfare of the people in that remote and destitute quarter of the parish; and, whatever may be the decision of the law, I am sure you cannot wonder if I should think it hard were my own door to be shut in my face.

This letter produced no answer, but after a variety of communications two alternatives were at length submitted to Dr Duncan, through a lawyer. Either, 1st, to allow the house to be converted into a parish-school, over which the established minister should have exclusive control; or, 2dly, to remove the materials at his own expense. The former of these Dr Duncan would willingly have agreed to, with the simple reservation, that he should be allowed liberty to hold his accustomed meetings at hours not devoted

to the business of the school. When he found this proposal hopeless, he was ready, for the sake of the people of the district, even to waive this claim; but when he applied to the heritors, and repeated his application by letter three several times, he was not even favoured with the courtesy of a reply. The second alternative, therefore, alone remained, and the idea struck him that some of the materials might not be altogether worthless in the erections now going on in connexion with the Free Church. Summoning the schoolmaster accordingly to leave the house, that functionary unexpectedly refused to comply, *disputing his legal title*, and it became plain that, except the proprietors of the estate should formally concur with him in enforcing ejectment, the alternative which had been forced on him, and which was the only one remaining, must be illusory. He did not doubt, however, that the concession already made was in good faith, and he applied accordingly to their agent to give him admittance to the premises. The reply is worthy of being recorded. It is dated 5th August, and is as follows :—

"I was yesterday favoured with your letter of the 3d current, and can only say that I have no farther instructions regarding the schoolhouse at ———, and can therefore give no further concurrence in removing the schoolmaster."

Thus the controversy ended. The schoolhouse still stands. *Its tablet of memorial has been torn down*, but the building will remain, so long as it exists, a monument not more to the Parent Savings Bank, than to the Free Church of Scotland, and the spirit in which, under the cover of British laws, she was at the outset of her successful career so unscrupulously opposed.

During the summer of 1845 it appeared evident that his increased and increasing labours were, notwithstanding the aid of his assistant, too much for his strength; and his family became seriously anxious, as winter approached, that he should be induced to remove from a scene in which the calls upon his failing energies were irresistible; and from a residence, the damp and discomforts of which were likely to tell severely upon his frame. The Rev. Henry Grey of Edinburgh, a near relative of Mrs Duncan's, had written proposing to him, on the part of several of the leading brethren in the metropolis, that he should remove to Edinburgh, where he might find useful and congenial occupation in connexion with the Church's progress. This was warmly seconded by his family, and by many of his friends, but it did not harmonize with his own feelings. He used to say, "if they take me from my flock, they may just lay me on the shelf. My energies, such as they were, are gone, and I really think, that if I be transplanted, I shall wither and die." His assistant, Mr Brown, had been proposed to the people early in the year, and it seemed probable would be elected as his colleague. The prospect of this settlement, which was in all respects pleasing to Dr Duncan, made him feel that the necessity for his remaining at Ruthwell might soon be lessened. Writing on this subject to Mrs Duncan, he says, "If it be the will of my heavenly Father to remove me, what am I that I should resist?—but I feel great reluctance even to think of it, till Mr Brown is fairly set afloat, and in full sail, and I would gladly, if possible, see the foundation of a manse laid with something like adequate funds for its completion. All this will require time. I had an idea of going to

Liverpool and Manchester, to try to raise L.200, in hopes that the rest would be given by the building committee, but George James" (his nephew in Liverpool) "discourages the attempt. Must I slip off at last like a knotless thread? I have no doubt that I might find something to do in Edinburgh, if I had *faith* for it, but I feel that I am too old to transplant. Yet I may well ask of what real use am I where I am? Let me place myself, with all the powers that remain to me, at the disposal of my Master. You at least may be of use in Edinburgh—and as for me—but I must be silent— * * I trust all difficulty with regard to Mr Brown is at an end. My only anxiety now is to see him fairly established in his charge. When that is accomplished, my work in Ruthwell will be over; but it is not merely his ordination that I look to—I think I would neither use him nor the people well, were I just to 'cut and run' at once. I am willing to submit to circumstances, and to attend to the pointings of Providence."

Such were the sentiments with which, some months earlier, he had viewed the prospect of removing to the streets of the metropolis from the rural sphere he had loved so well. But soon after, Mr Brown's ordination having in the mean time taken place, the way seemed so plainly marked that he no longer hesitated. November at length came, and found him preparing, under what he believed to be the approving sanction of the Great Head of the Church, to take the step he had contemplated. He left Ruthwell about the middle of that month, but it was with the deliberate intention of returning, should the Lord spare him, "to dwell among his own people," during the months of summer.

CHAPTER XXX.

REPOSE DISTASTEFUL — PROVIDENTIAL PREPARATIONS — LAST LABOURS—ILLNESS AND DEATH.

THE short period during which Dr Duncan resided in Edinburgh was not marked by any event worthy of record. He felt it strange and chilling to be unemployed in the regular duties of his sacred office; for, though he enjoyed frequent opportunities of preaching the Gospel in the Free Church pulpits of the metropolis and neighbourhood, he greatly missed the constantly recurring calls of parochial duty to which he had for so many years been habituated.

Besides, his heart was still at Ruthwell. Nor was it to be weaned from that home of his early happiness—that centre of his benevolent exertions and pastoral solicitude, by any ordinary inducements. To Ruthwell his conversation and his correspondence still mainly referred, and an irrepressible desire to devote his remaining strength to the good of his flock—now dearer to him, if possible, than at any former period—had taken fast hold of his mind.

It had always been his intention, should the Lord will, to spend the ensuing summer among his people; but the sanguine activity of his mind was dissatisfied with the lengthened inaction which winter and spring

seemed to impose. In the mean time, the comparative repose which he had enjoyed had been highly favourable to his health, and he resumed the project of proceeding to Liverpool and Manchester, for the purpose of endeavouring to raise, by contributions among friends in these wealthy towns, a sufficient sum wherewith to complete the buildings now erecting at Mount Kedar. Could this object be attained, he felt as if every earthly wish would be satisfied, and that he might devolve without hesitation whatever cares remained, together with the labours of his pastoral office, on the youthful minister who had just been ordained as his colleague.

It seemed as if an indulgent Providence, which suggested this last effort, had kindly prepared every circumstance connected with it so as to impress on it the character of a "Farewell to Time." Notwithstanding some earnest remonstrances, he had fixed the month of January for setting out on this expedition; nor could he be induced to delay to a milder season. Before entering on his work, he paid visits—as if in anticipation of what was soon to happen—to the families of all his children, so that they were permitted to enjoy a portion of his society under the most favourable circumstances, and, ere he should be withdrawn from them for ever, to derive from him a new and last lesson of energy and perseverance.

At Belhaven, where Mr Dodds was now placed as minister of the Free Church, he spent some time with his daughter, fulfilling the duties of that charge during her husband's necessary absence from home; and it was remarked, that his sermons at this time were peculiarly earnest and affectionate, while many felt that they were attended with a blessing. Soon

afterwards he visited his younger son, now the Free Church minister of Peebles, during a sacramental occasion, in the solemn services of which he took a large part. To the family there, it is peculiarly interesting to reflect that the last exercises in which they were engaged along with him on earth, were of a nature so much in unison with those which now employ his emancipated spirit in the realms above. Previous to returning to Edinburgh, he delivered a public address to the people of Peebles on the subject of Savings Banks, preparatory to the revival of one which had at a former period flourished in that place, but which was then almost defunct. Immediately afterwards, energetic measures were taken to carry out the plans which he had advocated, and the impulse then communicated resulted not only in the successful re-establishment of the Peebles Savings Bank, but in the formation of a similar institution for children, with the best prospect of success.

He visited Kelso on his way southwards, enjoying for a few days the society of Mr and Mrs Bonar; and early in January 1846 he reached Tynemouth, where his eldest son had lately gone to reside as minister of the Scotch Church in North Shields. Here he appeared more than ordinarily cheerful and vigorous. His health was evidently much recruited by the comparative repose he had lately been enjoying; and in the midst of his grandchildren he seemed delighted to cast off the feelings of age, and to return for a little to the lively enjoyments of early life. No child in the little new-year's party who were gathered together on the night of his arrival, was better pleased than himself with the gambols of the evening. During his short stay, every one was struck with the calm and hallowed spirit of

gentle and contented faith that marked him; and when he set out on a fine morning, buoyant in spirit as in younger days, anticipating the success of his contemplated visit to the great commercial towns of the West, and his return to Ruthwell in a few weeks, with money enough collected, to erect without debt, every edifice which the service of God should require in his congregation, his personal appearance held out the sanguine hope that he might yet be spared for some valuable years, to go in and out among them, to cheer their efforts, and to lead their pilgrim way to Heaven.

His evenings were generally spent in renewing his intercourse with old friends; and they agree in stating that he seemed to enjoy a peculiar flow of spirits—recurring with evident interest to former scenes and times. His success in Manchester and Liverpool was nearly commensurate with his hopes. He preached repeatedly, and spent every available moment in prosecuting the work he had undertaken. His friends were both surprised and distressed to witness his activity. They saw how completely his heart was engaged, but they feared that his strength might be overtaxed. Remonstrance, however, was vain. He felt that God had restored his vigour; and to whom besides, should that gift be dedicated?

A friend, whose society he enjoyed near Manchester, during a part of his sojourn there, wrote many reminiscences of their intercourse, from which we extract the following:—

"He looked wonderfully well, and had his usual cheerful and benevolent smile. When I spoke, however, of the length of time that had elapsed since we had met, and of the many changes which had taken place, and inquired respecting his health, he told me

he felt few of the infirmities of age, but that in walking through crowded streets he had a peculiar sensation at his heart; he was convinced that there was disease there, and that his call would be sudden.

"In the middle of the week he was busily engaged making out a list of gentlemen on whom he intended to call to solicit subscriptions for the Free Manse at Ruthwell. He was in high spirits at his success on the previous day. He spoke of his people, and how glad he was that they liked his assistant, adding, 'begging for one's self is not an agreeable office; but I have never felt as if I were asking for myself in Manchester. When I went round before it was for your sakes—I established a Presbyterian Church here—and this time, though it is for Ruthwell, it cannot be for myself, you know, it must be for my successor's benefit.'

"He went to a gentleman, an Episcopalian but holding the principles of the Scotch Establishment, to solicit a subscription, which was liberally given. When we afterwards jestingly accused the donor of dereliction of principle in aiding a cause he professed to dislike, he said, 'I could not refuse the venerable man who, with his family, had suffered so much in defence of what he thought right. I do not regret it in the least; on the contrary, I am glad it has been in my power to help him.'

"On the Sabbath following Dr Duncan preached twice at Salford, spending the interval and the night at Swinton. His heart seemed overflowing with peace and good-will to all men. He took notice of the children, and was very kind to them, speaking of his own grandchildren. He seemed vigorous, and was apparently little fatigued at the close of the evening service, although I had noticed some difficulty of breathing

during the latter part of the sermon. After our return he gave us a most impressive prayer at family worship, particularizing almost every individual present—especially praying for the absent children, and for the cause of Christ in Salford. Afterwards he said, 'When I go back with all this money, I shall feel that my work is done.' The Manse only was wanting to make it complete. I had long the idea in my mind of Church, Manse, and School. I hope to live to see them completed.'

"On the following morning he inquired more particularly into the state and prospects of the Church in Salford, and gave us much valuable advice concerning it. He was extremely kind and affectionate, as he always was, and, after he had taken leave, he came back again into the room to offer another suggestion which had occurred to him respecting the Church."

"It is a consolation," writes Mr William Duncan, who still resides near Liverpool, "that your father, my dear brother, paid a visit to Liverpool at the time he did, for it renewed our old friendship in a manner so pleasing, I shall never forget it while I live. He spent a day with us at the Villa. He was in excellent spirits the whole time, and seemed to participate in all that was going forward, with great animation and pleasure, referring to old stories with much enjoyment and cheerfulness. I fear his life was shortened by over-exertion in the cause he espoused." This surmise was perhaps favoured by the lively pleasure with which he spoke of the state and prospects of the Free Church, and the earnest and devoted interest he manifested in its progress and prosperity, indicating the energy of those efforts which he felt it a privilege still to put forth, when opportunity could be found, on be-

half of those eternal interests, for promoting which her great Head had emancipated her.

On one of the occasions in which he was thus expatiating—bearing his testimony to the faithfulness of God in sustaining and comforting his faithful ministers and people—a friend who was present expressed the very common sentiment, that the Free Church movement had been occasioned by passion more than principle, and appealed to Dr Duncan, whether, on a calm review of the past, he was not conscious of some regret. "Regret!" he exclaimed, with deep feeling, "what have I to regret? Can a man regret having had grace to act up to his principles? No: God forbid. Were I placed in similar circumstances to-morrow, it would be my only happiness to do as I have done." His friend, though opposed to the Free Church, took occasion soon after generously to present him with a liberal contribution for his building fund, as a tribute to the sacrifices made by her ministers to their religious principles.

He had lately been enrolled among the friends of Christian union who were engaged in preparing for the formation of what has since been known as the "Evangelical Alliance;" and he had an opportunity now, for the first time, of attending a public meeting on this subject in Manchester on the 16th of January. Of this he wrote—"It was not coldness to the Evangelical Alliance which kept me silent in my last as to my opinion of the meeting. I felt too much fatigued to express myself in any adequate way, and was glad to refer you to the newspaper which conveys my own impressions, and those of every one whom I have met with. The feeling was indeed heavenly; and though at first I was quite overpowered by the heat, being at the top

of the platform, I afterwards obtained a more comfortable place, and listened, especially to Angell James, Bickersteth, and Noel, with great delight. The Alliance is destined to effect great things—in fact, to revolutionize public feeling among Christians, and to break down what is worldly in the partition-walls of sect and party among the pious of every denomination."

In this, as in all his former visits to these crowded towns, he gathered round him the people of his parish who had migrated thither. On the present occasion, he wrote with regret that he met "but two Ruthwell lads" in Salford, and had not been able to give notice to the bulk of them who lived in other parts of Manchester. In Liverpool he was more successful, and wrote with gladness that he met with nearly a dozen of them in his nephew's office. These were persons who had been under his care at different stages of his ministry, from infancy till they had passed through his classes and quitted the parish, and therefore were of various ages. He hailed them in his own fatherly manner, inquired into their temporal concerns, and tendered to them spiritual counsels. His female parishioners he sought at their own homes.

While on this mission, he also found a work prepared for him by his Master, in every respect congenial with his feelings. A few Presbyterians in Chester, wishing to erect a congregation in that city, had shortly before obtained the cordial encouragement of the Presbytery of Lancashire, and Dr Duncan was requested to proceed thither, for the purpose of opening their church, on the 1st of February. This was a call which he could not resist; and it is pleasing to be able to quote the following from a letter addressed shortly after to a friend in Scotland, by one who was present at the ser-

vices on that occasion. We linger with interest on a scene which proved to be so near the close of his earthly course.

"When first he ascended the pulpit, the stranger was struck with the patriarchal appearance of the aged minister, and his dignified aspect and demeanour inspired at once lofty expectations of the preacher, and love and veneration for the man. He commenced, as is usual in Scotland, with praise and prayer, fervently imploring a blessing on the cause he had been selected to commence in this city. He then took his text from John v. 24, 'But is passed from death unto life.' In the evening his discourse was from John vi. 68, 'To whom shall we go?' &c. Having no notes of these sermons, and now only an imperfect recollection of them, I shall not attempt any description, farther than to say, that they were characterized by lofty argument and elegance of language rather than by dazzling eloquence. Occasionally he became very fervid, and it was grand to hear him refer to the great Matthew Henry, who was once a Presbyterian minister in this city. I remember how his voice expanded and his eye flashed with animation, when in each of his sermons he named with eulogy the great commentator. I shall never forget the beauty of an illustration in one of these discourses, in which he compared the calm serenity of the heavens in an unclouded evening, to the believer's peaceful passage from death unto life. How irresistibly this metaphor was recalled, when reading in a short memoir published in the *Dumfries Standard*, the incident of his being carried, after he was seized with his last illness, to the scene of the closing struggle of his life, and of the admiration of the cloudless moonlight, which at that awful moment

he expressed. 'Verily,' thought I, 'here was this truly great man, at a distance from his own loved home, in the midst of strangers, eleven days before his summons, pourtraying his own exit from the stage of time!'"

Shortly after this visit he hastened homewards, carrying with him the liberal offerings he had obtained, in the hope of being able soon to complete, in a satisfactory manner, all that he had contemplated. On leaving Liverpool, he was accompanied to the railway station by three affectionate nephews, who thus secured the very last moments they could enjoy of his society, and who, within little more than one short week, mingled their grief with that of the train of mourners who carried his body to its burial. He travelled in company with John Cropper, Esq. of Liverpool, who kindly conceded to the wish of his mourning family, and gave a sketch of their intercourse as they journeyed by the way. That converse, as well as his refreshing of spirit by the Alliance meeting, seemed kindly granted to sanctify and prepare his spoul for its hasty removal from this world of hurry and shifting emotion.

"Feb. 16, 1846.

"As you wish that I should call to mind what I could of my journey on Thursday with Dr Duncan, I have pleasure in doing so, though I feel I can give you only a very imperfect account; my recollection of it is sweet, and must ever remain so.

"Till we reached Lancaster, our conversation was a good deal on his remembrances of early life in Liverpool, and of persons long, I may say, all but forgotten. He seemed very happy, and very free from care; and even when he found at Lancaster that his luggage was missing, though of course disturbed, I really think that I felt it almost as much as he did.

"After leaving Lancaster, our conversation turned more on heavenly topics, and on the pleasure Christians enjoy in 'speaking often one to another.' We thus led each other on into very free and happy communion. I had in my pocket a copy of 'Miss Plumptre's Letters.' I called his attention to some of them, which, from their freshness and fulness of spiritual hope and joy, have deeply interested me. One he enjoyed very much, in which she speaks with joyful anticipation of her heavenly home, and of the glorious rest. This led us on to many passages of scripture, where Jesus is spoken of as the Saint's rest. I read a hymn which was new to him, and he was very much pleased with it. I also read to him two verses of one of Kelly's, which I have copied, and enclose. I thought it applied very happily to the state of his own mind—

'Nothing wanting, nothing fearing,
Having all he hoped for here.'

"I read several letters to him, and, on my asking him if he were tired, he begged I would go on; for, said he, 'we are very happy, and very profitably employed—can we spend the time better?'

"I could only regret that our journey was so soon to terminate, and with it what is now our last intercourse. It was but a foretaste, and, though often interrupted, a very sweet one, of what will soon recommence; but which will neither know interruption, nor come to an end. Believe me, affectionately, yours,

"JOHN CROPPER."

EXTRACT FROM KELLY'S HYMN ON—
"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

"To the saints in heaven appearing,
Heaven that yields them sweet repose,

Nothing wanting, nothing fearing,
Safe from every storm that blows;
Free from sorrow, sin, and fear,
Having all they hoped for here.

"All perils past, and gone for ever,
Oh how cheering is the thought,
Once we pass through Jordan river,
Then we rest, and labour not.
Nothing is, to those oppressed,
Grateful as the thought of rest."

As he drove through Clarencefield on his way to Comlongon, the residence of his brother-in-law, Mr Phillips, the people flocked to their doors to see him pass. An affectionate old female parishioner rushed into the road to meet him, and, grasping his hand, both burst into tears, so that neither could exchange a word of greeting; and he passed on, his heart surcharged with the most affecting emotions of gratitude and joy. Once more amid scenes which every where reminded him of former efforts, not a moment was lost in prosecuting the work he had to do. It was on Friday, the 6th of February, that he arrived; and, as if aware that his time was short, heedless of fatigue, he spent what remained of that day, and most of the next, at Kedar, giving necessary directions connected with the works, and particularly providing for the tasteful disposition of the ground on which the erections were proceeding.

The heart of the parish was stirred by his arrival. His last note to Mrs Duncan, written on the Tuesday, breathes activity and life, and shows his unabated energy on his last Sabbath on earth:—

"I find it will be impossible for me to do all I wish here, and be in Edinburgh before Thursday. I have preached at Kedar and at Ruthwell village both. I

have recovered my luggage, for which I am right thankful. I had been preparing a new sermon for Kedar; but having got my notes by the carpet-bag, I used what I had prepared for my evening service. There was a large attendance both at church and in the society room; and I have been every where received with open arms. Yesterday I visited many families, although the weather was boisterous. Some of the sick I have seen twice. Hoping to meet you in health and enjoyment on Thursday, I am your ever-loving, "H. DUNCAN."

Many attended church who had separated themselves from his ministry, but still retained an affectionate regard for his person. There was an impressive solemnity and earnestness in the services, which deeply affected his people. His text in the morning was from John iii. 18—"He that believeth not is condemned already." * He told his hearers that he had not come among them to speak smooth things, or to flatter them in favourite delusions; that there were some among them of whom he stood anxiously in doubt, and that he felt as if he fulfilled his duty best by faithfully sounding an alarm. His mind had doubtless been dwelling on the hardening influence which seemed to have pervaded the hearts of too many, with whom he had often in vain pleaded on behalf of their souls; and he now left them his last warning, to "flee from the wrath to come."

In the hurried course of visitation to which the two following days were devoted, hardly one old friend was omitted. His warm heart carried him indiscrimi-

* A sketch of this sermon, taken from the imperfect notes from which it was preached, appeared shortly after in the "Christian Treasury."

nately into the houses of his parishioners, whether of the Free Church or of the Establishment, and by all he was cordially greeted. On the Tuesday, he was followed by the eyes of several of his people to the churchyard, at the gate of which they observed him stop and fasten his horse. He then entered, and was seen to stand long by the railing that encircled the spot of earth where many years before he had laid a long loved partner, and where, on the Tuesday following, he was himself to find a grave. What memories of former days then crowded on his mind, we shall never know. Probably a shade of regret was there that he might not at last rest among those whom he had loved so much, and for so many of whom he felt all the tenderness of a parent for his children.

He had been invited by an elder in the Establishment to hold a prayer meeting at his house at Cockpool on the evening of that day; and, as it drew on to the time, he was noticed, with a step almost youthful, speeding from door to door in the village of Ruthwell, that, if possible, no kind heart might be wounded by an omission. He had a cheerful and a hearty word for each; and he finished this two days' labour of love, "weary in body, but rejoicing in spirit," by driving to the place of meeting, which lay about two miles westward. Here he was kindly welcomed. The house soon filled; and, as the sun had set, he proceeded by candle light to conduct the services. It was remarked by his auditors, when the subsequent stroke had rendered every small movement matter of observation, that their minister was at this time free from agitation, and held his presence of mind, up to the moment when the first note of the final summons was sounded in his ear. The table on which the Bible was placed was low, and

consequently the light did not reach the book when raised in his hand. Instead of making a bustle, by applying to the good woman of the house for some means of raising the light, he cast his eye quietly around, and, with the old fertility in expedient and adaptation for which he was remarkable, took a jug which hung on the wall, placed it on the table, and on it set his candlestick, and then proceeded to read. After singing the 121st Psalm and prayer, he gave out as his text, Zech. iii. 9, "For behold the stone," &c. It was while in the act of illustrating these words that the messenger of death met him. He had not spoken above ten minutes when his voice faltered, his whole frame trembled, and all the symptoms of paralysis became apparent. He was supported to a chair, but could not sustain himself upright. An attempt was then made to lift him into his conveyance, which was quickly prepared, but this was found impracticable; and at length it was suggested that a bed should be extended on a cart, on which he might be laid, and so carefully conducted to Comlongon, which lay at the distance of about a mile. This plan was adopted. Supported in the cart by one of his attached people, and followed by those who, not an hour before, had gathered together to attend on his instructions, he was silently conveyed to the house of his affectionate relatives.

As the melancholy procession moved along, the moon looked down with chastened lustre, and the more brilliant of the stars shone unclouded over the scene. Lifting up his hand, though now scarce able to speak, he was heard, as he cast his upturned eye over the heavens, to utter the admiring exclamation, "Glorious! most glorious!" Arrived at their desti-

nation, he was lifted by tender and willing hands, and conveyed to bed. Whatever sisterly affection and medical skill could accomplish was done. Among many disinterested and affectionate competitors for the office of sick-nurse, there was one who had hastened to his chamber on the first alarm, claiming the post as her special privilege. She had long been a domestic in his family, and in her arms his departed wife had died. When he observed her by his bedside he held out his hand, and, taking hers, burst into tears. It need not be added, that the duty was discharged with tender anxiety and faithfulness.

A letter has just fallen into my hands from one of the cottage daughters of the parish, to an old bible-class-fellow at a distance, which brings the scene with such truth and good sense before us, that the reader may welcome it as I have done.

"Ruthwell, Feb. 12, 1846, Evening.

"Dear M——, This leaves us well in bodily health, but you will know ere this the calamity that has befallen us all here. Dr Duncan is suddenly laid speechless, but he was serving his Master when he received the stroke. I sit down to write with different feelings than when I wrote last. We were in expectation of seeing once more our venerable and dear minister, and he has come—but I think it is to end his days in Ruthwell. He came a long round out of his way to see us all; and who thought it was to be his last? I never saw him in better spirits in my life. He stopped at our door on Friday, and so cheerful he was! He went to Kedar on Saturday. He preached on Sabbath to a full church as ever I saw; he was on the danger of unbelief. In the evening, in the Society room, on brotherly love; and I think since, he went through the whole parish—Moderates and Freemen, he made no difference, and they came all to hear him. This evening he went to Cockpool, to preach, I think I may say his last sermon. Mr Brown wished to have spoken for him, but he said it was his last night, and he must preach. So he began once more to

dispense the bread of life to sinners. He read the first chapter of Revelations, and his text was in Zechariah, 'Upon one stone shall be seven eyes.' He had not proceeded far when his countenance changed. * * * *

"Mr Brown is very much cast down. I never saw him shed tears till to-day. He has been in attendance nearly all the time. They hold a prayer meeting at Ruthwell to-night, and very unfit he is to speak. My mother is at Comlongon now, and I will not close my letter till the morning. Mr Brown said to him yesterday, 'I hope you are leaning on that Saviour whom you have so long served?' he replied, 'O, yes sir.'

"He took his sister by the hand and said, 'Mary, dear,' thinking Mrs Duncan had come, but he saw his mistake, and said, 'Not her yet.'

"Comlongon avenue has been crowded these two days. One stream of people going very mournful-like down, the other coming up. The parish is in deep affliction, and so they may. But I hope he is going to that happy land above, where there is no sorrow, and where the Lamb will wipe away all tears from his eyes. He has spent a long life-time in the service of his Heavenly Master. Henceforth, I hope, there is laid up for him

> 'A crown that cannot fade,
> The righteous Judge at that great day
> Will place it on his head.'"

"Friday Morning.

"Dear M——, The storm is changed into a calm. Dr Duncan died last night, ten minutes before eleven. My mother was at his bedside. He had no pain apparent, but slept away. He took notice of no person. I hope his spirit has winged its flight to the mansions of everlasting bliss. Dear M——, I say no more. Your well-wisher"—

Never did worn-out veteran find a death more in keeping with his history. Struck down at the successful close of what he had long contemplated as his last campaign, with the weapons of his spiritual warfare still in his grasp, he died a Christian soldier's blessed death, amid scenes dignified by his unceasing labours, and in the midst of those who had followed the banner which, on behalf of Christ, he had nobly

unfurled because of the truth. His duty done, the Master thus at its close called him to his reward.

During his short illness, he was never able to utter more than a few words consecutively; so that, in his case, we have not the happiness or edification of a deathbed testimony; but he has left a witness even more satisfactory in the devoted and unwavering zeal for his Master's glory, by which his history, especially in its latter years, was distinguished. Neither his dear wife nor his attached children had the privilege to arrive in time for the closing scene; but they met in the house of mourning to shed their tears in mutual sorrow and condolence over their common loss.

The funeral took place a few days later. It was attended by an immense concourse of deeply affected mourners from all the country round, and by many ministers of different sections of the Christian Church—Established, Free Church, and Dissenting. His body was laid within an enclosure, which he had many years before prepared, at the corner of the parish churchyard nearest the manse. He sleeps beside the wall which separates it from the garden; and his last resting-place is in the midst of scenes gladdened and adorned for nearly half a century by his deeds of benevolence and self-devotion.

The funeral sermon was preached, on the following Sabbath at Mount Kedar, by the Rev. H. M. Broun, of Lochmaben, who, for years, had been to him a dear brother in the ministry as well as a co-presbyter. From many pulpits through the south of Scotland the lessons taught by the event were proclaimed; and an able and affectionate sermon, preached by the Rev. Robert Brydon of Dunscore, from the appropriate text —"The path of the just is as the shining light," &c., was published in Dumfries.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CHARACTER—EXAMPLES—MEMORIALS.

A FEW concluding remarks are all that now remain to be added. The most striking feature in the character we have just been contemplating was *benevolence*. Dr Duncan's life as a minister had three distinct stages. The first, youthful, ardent, and inexperienced; the second, public-spirited, active, and philanthropic; the third, marked by evangelistic fervour, zeal, and self-devotion; and in all the same characteristic was ever prominent.

If we consult his parishioners, we find that it is to this feature they most readily recur in their reminiscences. Besides the numerous illustrative examples recorded in the foregoing pages, they have many tales to tell of him, more or less homely in their character, bearing the same stamp. One remembers how he used to visit the poor, carrying to them, unobserved, supplies of food, or medicine, or wine. Another recollects how earnestly, some forty years ago, he became the advocate of the poor *salters* of his parish, whose ancient charter, permitting them to manufacture salt, free of duty, some one had threatened to take from them. A third recalls the zeal with which he defended several

of his people who, when pursuing their calling as fishermen, had discovered, and in their ignorance of Admiralty rights had appropriated, a lordly whale stranded in the shallows of the Solway. A fourth, who had once fallen into arrears in the payment of his rent, and was likely to be ruined, gratefully relates how his minister came to him in the hour of need, and, like an angel of comfort, devised effectual means for his relief. A fifth recalls the time of alarm when almost all were soldiers, and tells of a poor young Carlisle quaker who, in a fit of folly, had enlisted and then deserted, and who, after wandering for months to escape the lash, found his way stealthily at last to the Manse of Ruthwell, and by the intercession of their minister obtained, as the reply to his application facetiously expressed it, "relief from apprehension both of mind and body." A sixth informs us how he would tear from the shirt he wore its linen sleeves, when needed, to dress the wounds of a sufferer. A seventh remembers how often he drove his phaeton from Dumfries, laden with flax, to be spun by the unemployed women of the parish; and how thoughtfully at the period of the potato failure, when seed was dear and beyond the reach of his poor neighbours, he procured for them, by sea, a supply of "earlies," so as to secure a return nearly two months sooner than could have been otherwise obtained. And an eighth reminds us how, a few years ago, he converted his garden-house into "a hermitage," rudely furnished with table, stool, and bed, for the accommodation of poor Arthur Reidez, giving him at the same time free quarters on the produce both of garden and kitchen. Arthur was a wounded seaman, wandering in search of bread, whose natural genius, shining through his rags,

had attracted his attention, and whose story had excited his compassion. Nor is it forgotten by many poor families how kindly, efficiently, and promptly, he once proposed and carried into effect measures for their relief when threatened with wholesale ejectment. The occasion referred to was indeed a distressing one. On the system which has been so unmercifully followed in some parts of the Highlands, it became the wish of a proprietor to diminish the population on his estate. An order was issued to warn a whole village to remove. A bitter cry arose among the people. Their consultations with the minister were innumerable, and his share in their grief was deep and sincere. After taking counsel with some of the grey fathers of the place he called together the heads of houses. He began by telling them that he was not hopeless, because he did not despair of seeing the landlord convinced of the impolicy of the course on which he had entered. He then made some strong observations on the degree of alarm manifested by some at the possibility of losing their temporal abodes, in contrast with their torpor regarding a heavenly inheritance, and concluded by calling on them to join in prayer for the blessing of Him who alone could turn the heart of the man who, in His providence, had the power to relieve their anxieties. Before parting they entered into consultation as to the course they ought to follow, and, at his suggestion, measures were adopted which ended in satisfactory and glad success.

It was in such paternal acts of sympathy and exertion that Dr Duncan expended himself for his people, and tales and recollections like these are innumerable among them.

One characteristic incident must not be omitted here,

and it is one which few of his parishioners, if any, have heard. Shortly after Dr Duncan's removal from the manse to the cottage, he received information of the return of a beloved young friend to England, a widower, with a little boy, in very reduced circumstances, but possessed of a profession and abilities which he hoped might in time become available for his support. This was the only time in which his newly straitened funds seemed to bear hard on the venerable man, whose heart and hand had, for nearly half a century, enabled him to devise and accomplish liberal things. He was sad and silent all the evening; but the post-bag did not return to Dumfries, next day, without conveying a draft on his diminished fund in the bank for the relief of his friend. At dinner he steadily refused his glass of wine, which he had used, by medical advice, for several years, and it was not till after earnest urgency, that he revealed a deliberate resolution, from which no persuasions ever afterwards induced him to depart, to relinquish the use of it entirely, that he might thus be better able to give to him that needed. He for whose benefit the sacrifice was made never heard the story; nor would it now have been recorded, had he not since been called to follow him to "that bourne from whence no traveller returns."

These were some of the daily and more retired examples of his natural disposition. But to fit him in the quiet sphere he had chosen, for the place which he came to occupy as a benefactor of his country and his species, peculiar qualifications were requisite. With these his Maker had liberally endowed him. Prompt, versatile, and ingenious, he felt no difficulty in practically applying the principles he had learned in youth, whether at college-halls or in the busy marts of com-

mercy, to the necessities he desired to remedy. His active and inventive mind, ever full of resources, was sustained by a spirit of sanguine hope which made him take small account of difficulties, and led him, though baffled often, still to renew his efforts till his object was accomplished. Early brought into contact with the world, he carried with him, to his distant parish, a disembarrassed readiness of correspondence and of intercourse with men, which peculiarly fitted him for the business-part of his self-imposed duties, and enabled him, without restraint or hesitation, to communicate his views, and claim for them sympathy and attention in the highest quarters. To these qualities we trace his success in establishing among his own people, and spreading over the nation, under Government protection, the system of Savings Banks, a measure which claimed at his hands nearly ten years of devoted attention, pecuniary sacrifice, and hearty energy.

Throughout life we have found him distinguished for his fine taste, his love of literature, and his aptitude for scientific inquiry. Though the more brilliant attributes of genius cannot, perhaps, be claimed for him, he possessed unquestionably, by nature's gift, a poet's eye, the hand of a painter, and the inquisitive spirit of a philosopher. His time, occupied by more important duties, permitted him only now and then to make some slight experiments in these fields; but the results indicated what he might have done had favourable circumstances drawn him to expatiate in them more largely. Yet it is to the closing period of his history that we delight especially to turn. He will doubtless be gratefully remembered as a philanthropist—his people are not likely soon to forget him as a pastor—science will not disown his merit as a discoverer, nor

the antiquary fail to record the services he has rendered to his favourite subject—literature will recognise his hand in the works of which he was the author; and patriotism will acknowledge his far-seeing benevolence and public spirit. In these various departments, justice, no doubt, will be done to his memory; but it is as a Christian Minister that we see his chief dignity and honour. Devoted to the cause of Christ and of souls, his labours were indefatigable, and only bounded by the powers of his feeble body, which frequently gave way ere the salient promptings of his zeal had been half satisfied. "Oh! that I were now to begin my life again, with youth and health upon my side," was his exclamation, in reply to one who was too querulously regretting the disquiet of the Church's condition, "how I should rejoice in this noble struggle! How gladly should I hail the prospect of spending my life in labours and trials for a cause so well worth any sacrifice!" Thus did the aged veteran long to throw himself into a contest on behalf of truth and of immortal souls, the value of which he felt that till now he had never sufficiently appreciated. For some years before his death he used to regret the discursive nature of many of his former occupations. His original character—less systematic than ardent, more influenced by the practical than the speculative, and apt to suit itself to circumstances—gave him a readiness, while it inspired a tendency, to occupy whatever ground was open to him in his favourite walks, so that he was frequently led away from the direct objects of his sacred profession to congenial and conterminous pursuits. It was perhaps to be expected that, as his spirituality of mind increased, he should be less disposed to regard these extraneous efforts with compla-

cency, and yet we are led to the conclusion, to which reflection seems to have brought himself, that his usefulness in the world arose, in some degree, out of these tendencies. As early as 1833 he thus expressed himself in a letter to Mary Lundie. "In early life I had some religious feelings, but they were rather aspirations than principles. I had some activity, but it more frequently led me wrong than right. Even now, it is only to my beloved M.'s partiality that I owe the favourable opinion she expresses of me. That strange and wayward propensity which makes me to neglect my own immediate duties, for objects, good in themselves perhaps, but less within my proper sphere, she must have observed, and I feel it is my besetting failing. Yet that conviction does not lead me to amendment. In truth, I have a notion that if I should curb it, my character would rather deteriorate than gain by the restraint. My mind would lose its tone, and I should become that despicable thing called *a ministerial drone!*" It was this versatility which constituted, in a great measure, his idiosyncrasy, and made him, in natural character, what he was.

He was a sincerely attached child of the Church of Scotland. It was the church of his ancestors, the church of his own deliberate choice. Its doctrines—its discipline—its history—its struggles—its martyred heroes—its undying testimony—he ever regarded with admiration and enthusiasm. As he advanced in years this subject occupied more of his heart, as it came necessarily more completely to engage his attention; and when he heard his Master's summons to the defence of Zion's strongholds, now again assailed, no youthful champion in Scotland ran more alertly to that defence than he.

His sacrifices in this cause were made deliberately and cheerfully. No one ever heard him regret them, nor does one expression of indignation or impatience seem ever to have escaped him. He not only acknowledged the right of the State, under its responsibility to Christ, to say on what terms the Church should remain connected with itself, but, while denying the soundness of those principles by which its decisions were governed, he was ready to grant that the Ministry of the day acted according to their light, and the information furnished by their usual organs.

And yet, perhaps, the question will be asked by others: What was gained by forcing on a Disruption of the long existing alliance of the Church of Scotland with the State? or, What in all the long and well-spent life of such a minister as this, or in his later testimony to the ancient truth, rendered it necessary that he should be subjected to such a change in old age? Must it be acknowledged that, even in the highest quarters in British society, the true theory of a Scriptural alliance between Church and State is yet unsolved, and that the Christian pastor who here faithfully maintains the liberties of the Church in things spiritual, must do so beyond the pale of the constitution of his country? Be it so. His freedom as a Christian is dearer to him than all besides, and with hearty goodwill he follows his Master "without the camp, bearing his reproach." Poverty cannot deprive him of his reward, nor the frown of the great lessen its value. He is the subject of a Crown whose favours elevate the soul to its true dignity and happiness, and whose rewards are immortal.

Few public characters have had their merits more promptly recognised by monumental memorials than

Dr Duncan. Besides the simple inscription over his tomb, a marble tablet to his memory has been placed, by the affectionate respect of several friends, in the parish church. At Mount Kedar, among the group of buildings, which are themselves his monument, a lofty obelisk, illustrated by his bust, and appropriate inscriptions, reminds his flock of their former pastor, and tells the traveller whose was the creative genius to which these interesting erections are due; and, at Dumfries, a handsome structure bearing his name, and adorned by his statue, has been built to serve the purposes of the Savings Bank of that burgh.

The locality which he adorned has thus been studded with his memorials. A railway* now intersects it, which, almost ere this volume sees the light, will bring a busy world upon a scene hitherto but seldom intruded on from without. Should the reader at any time be borne through the district on the wings of steam, he may be interested to learn, that many of the spots of which he has been reading are within reach of his observation. Scarce six miles from Annan, on his way to Dumfries, he enters the parish of Ruthwell, and about a mile farther he passes the Manse, which looks up upon him from its trees on the left, at the distance of a few hundred yards. Near, but beyond it, lies the Church, in the midst of its graves; and over it, about half a mile nearer the sea, may be noticed the low roofs of the village. As he speeds along, the traveller in a minute more will observe, also on his left, the village of Clarencefield, at one extremity of which stands the cottage to which the family retired on leaving the Manse; and near the

* The Glasgow, Dumfries, and Carlisle.

other, the still humbler dwelling which afterwards received them. Comlongon Castle may just be seen rearing its ancient head beyond, at the foot of which stands the modern mansion, occupied by Mr Phillips—the scene of his death. A few minutes more bring the traveller in sight of the Free Church, Manse, and School at Mount Kedar, and of the monumental Obelisk, which stand prominent on the rising ground to the right. He is already beyond the parish of Ruthwell, and has traversed the country which for forty-seven years was gladdened by the benevolence and zeal of the subject of this Memoir. The soil is not peculiarly fertile, and the landscape possesses few engaging features; but in the eyes of those who knew *him*, its scenery never can be divested of a colouring, more lovely than the richest garniture of nature could have given it.

APPENDIX.

I.

ENGLISH STORY IN A NUT-SHELL, WRITTEN BY DR DUNCAN FOR THE USE OF HIS YOUNG FRIENDS, AND REFERRED TO AT p. 90.

THE sun, in his course thro' the sky, never shone
On a nation so free and so blest as our own;
In heroes and patriots, at sea and on dry land,
The world cannot cope with our sweet little island.

THE ROMANS. A.C. 55.

But oft we have heard, how in rude days of yore,
The streams of this dear land were redden'd with gore;
For the Romans came over, those bold meddling fellows,
To polish and fleece—to enlighten and quell us.

THE SAXONS. A.D. 449.

Then next, from his woods and his wilds, came the Saxon,
And sore was the burden he laid our poor backs on;
Though Arthur and all the brave knights of his table,
Fought with hearts that were true, and with hands that were able.

THE MONARCHY. A.D. 827.

When the seven crowns of England great Egbert put on,
The Danes saw his glory, and envied his throne;
Then rushed with their swarms from the hives of the north,
Till they rued, mighty Alfred! thy valour and worth.

DANES. 1017.

Thrice three were the monarchs of Alfred's descent,
Ere the crown by the Dane from the Saxon was rent;
That Dane was great Canute, and after came four men,
Two Danes and two Saxons, then William the Norman.

WILLIAM CONQUEROR. 1066. WILL. RUFUS. 1087.

Great William, ambitious, greedy, and bold,
Quelled the pride of his barons, and seized on their gold;
And Rufus, his son, who was treacherous and moody,
Had a life that was restless, and death that was bloody.

HENRY I. BEAUCLERC. 1100.

Then Henry, the learned, sat down on the throne,
And fettered good Robert for claiming his own;
Though great was his fame, yet his joy was imperfect—
He lived a usurper, and died of a surfeit.

STEPHEN. 1135.

Tho' the crown to Matilda, his daughter, was given,
'Twas seized by his nephew, the politic Stephen,
Who reigned o'er a lawless and turbulent crew,
And curbed their fierce rage, though he could not subdue.

HENRY II. PLANTAGENET. 1155.

Plantagenet Henry, the virtuous and great,
Next mounted the throne, for the good of the state;
Though his sons were rebellious, and Becket was proud,
Yet the people he raised, and the nobles he bowed.

RICHARD I. 1189.

And now comes first Richard the Cœur de Lion,
For his prowess the theme of the legend and song;
But the best blood of England was shed for his glory,
And his life was unhappy, though brilliant his story.

JOHN. 1199.

Then John, that base tyrant, ascended the throne,
And deep 'neath his rod caused all England to groan;
Yet blest shall his reign be, though blasted his fame,
For England's Great Charter is signed with his name.

HENRY III. 1216.

John's son was Third Henry, the weak and the mild,
As fickle and pettish and fond as a child;
So loosely he held the state reins in his hand,
That discord and anarchy reigned o'er the land.

EDWARD I. 1272.

But Edward his son, gen'rous, crafty, and brave,
Was to England a hero, to Scotland a knave;
His fame spread for arms and for wisdom afar,
A zephyr in peace, and a tempest in war.

EDWARD II. 1307.

The son of Great Ned bore the name of his sire,
But partook not his valour, his genius, or fire;
His favourites were murdered, his Queen was untrue,
And a victim he died to his profligate shrew.

EDWARD III. 1327.

But Edward the Third was a hero in fight,
And Cressy and Poictiers experienced his might;
Two kings were his captives, from France and from Scotland,
Yet he lost in the dotage of age his ill-got land.

RICHARD II. 1377.

Then dropped on the head of young Richard the crown,
And fair, when Wat Tyler fell, was his renown;
But quickly he blasted the hopes of the nation,
And living an epicure—died of starvation.

HENRY IV. OF LANCASTER. 1399.

'Twas Lancaster Henry that murdered this king,
And the crown that he seized on was cursed with a sting;
For Percy embittered his days from the north,
And ambition obscured his bright dawnings of worth.

HENRY V. 1413.

Fifth Henry, his son, when his wild oats were sown,
Caused nations to wonder, and rev'rence his throne;
His prowess in battle let Agincourt tell,
Where the glory of France and her liberty fell.

HENRY VI. 1422.

But Henry the Sixth, from the crown of the French,
Was chased in a fright by the Orleans wench ;
And spite of the valour of Margaret his wife,
Lost at last his own kingdom, his freedom, and life.

SAME REIGN.

'Twas then that the roses—the pale and the red,
Desolation and terror o'er England had spread ;
For wide stalked *pale* terror and *red* desolation,
Whilst a York and a Lancaster parted the nation.

EDWARD IV. 1461.

Fourth Edward of York dipped his sceptre in blood,
While Margaret and Warwick his prowess withstood ;
He was handsome and daring, to give him his due,
But his vices were many—his virtues were few.

EDWARD V. AND RICHARD III. 1483.

By Richard, the Crook-back, Fifth Edward was slain,
But the throne he usurped Richard could not maintain ;
For Henry of Richmond came boldly from France,
And quelled the vile traitor beneath his strong lance.

HENRY VII. 1485.

Seventh Henry the white rose entwined with the red,
For Eliza of York shared his crown and his bed ;
And though Warwick and Warbeck were slain by his orders,
At home he gave good laws—and peace through his borders.

HENRY VIII. 1509.

Eighth Henry was cruel, fantastic, and vile,
With a rubicund face, and a heart full of guile ;
He sported with Englishmen's freedom and lives,
The Pope he renounced, and beheaded his wives.

EDWARD VI. 1547.

Sixth Edward ! thy memory and name shall be dear,
Whilst virtue, religion, and truth we revere ;
Ah ! why was thy glory so fleeting, though bright,
Like the meteor which gleams in the darkness of night !

MARY. 1553.

Sister Mary, the bloody, that bigoted dame,
Tried our souls to enlighten with faggot and flame ;
But when Cranmer was burnt, from the pyre where he died
Burst the light of true faith, rapid, glorious, and wide.

ELIZABETH. 1558.

Sister Bess was an artful and masculine woman,
In craft and in judgment who yielded to no man ;
Her statesmen were wise, and her foes were ill-fated,
But with blood both her love and her envy she sated.

JAMES I., STUART. 1603.

From Scotland came James, so pedantic and vain,
And of *king-craft* he preached till men laughed at his reign ;
Brave Raleigh he murdered—the Irish he settled—
His fav'rites were haughty—his subjects high-mettled.

CHARLES I. 1625.

When Charles his vile taxes our throats thought to cram down,
He raised thy bold spirit and zeal, noble Hampden ;
And when Hampden and Falkland in battle lay dead,
Came Cromwell the sturdy, and struck off his head.

OLIVER CROMWELL. 1649.

This Cromwell sat down on the throne as Protector—
A Nestor in council, in battle a Hector ;
Though his enemies called him usurper and knave,
Yet vigour and glory to Britain he gave.

CHARLES II. 1660.

By Monk, Second Charles was restored to the throne,
And Britain rejoiced when he came to his own ;
But plots filled his dissolute reign with vexation ;
And the scaffold received the best blood of the nation.

JAMES II. 1685.

Second James was a bigot in heart and in mind,
And the Pope in his bonds had his conscience entwined ;
But vain was his hope the true faith to pull down,
For out he was kicked from his kingdom and crown.

WILLIAM III. OF ORANGE. 1688.

When William from Holland, with freedom came over,
The nation exulted from Orkney to Dover;
Thanks, glory, and praise to his memory are due,
Though Glencoe and sad Darien all Scotland must rue.

ANNE STUART. 1702.

Next, Anna! thy classic and glorious age,
Gave birth to the hero, the poet, and sage;
For Roman-like, Pope, Swift, and Addison wrote,
And France owned that Marlborough Roman-like fought.

GEORGE I. OF HANOVER. 1714.

The First George, the German, we sent for from Hanover,
Who triumphed Mar's rebel and Jacobite clan over;
But Walpole, his friend, throve on bribery and vice,
And proved his own words true, "most men have their price."

GEORGE II. 1727.

George Second, though fiery, yet kind and true-hearted,
Ne'er fled from a foeman—a friend ne'er deserted;
But Charles, whose young bosom a hero's heart glowed in,
Felt a merciless hand on the field of Culloden.

GEORGE III. 1760.

Then, by Third George the worthy the sceptre was held,
And his reign both in length and in greatness excelled;
By others, let fame, wit, and genius be prized,
But for him wisdom, truth, and religion sufficed.

SAME REIGN.

A Pitt and a Fox were then guiding the helm,
Whilst a Nelson and Well'sly defended the realm;
But Colombia revolted, and Ireland was mutinous,
And while Africa blessed us, mad France was for shooting us.

GEORGE IV. PRINCE REGENT, 1811. KING, 1820.

And now, Royal George! since thy sire reigns no more,
May the fame of thy wisdom from shore spread to shore;
Till Europe, amazed, on thy proud brow shall bind
The olive with Waterloo's laurels entwin'd.

May Britain, enthroned on her own native ocean,
Still draw, from her children, their hearts' fond devotion;
And through her wide reign, in the east, west, and north,
Bear the palm, 'mongst the nations, for honour and worth.

May Commerce, released from her old swaddling bands,
Burst forth in her strength and with Freedom join hands;
While Science shall shed on the poorest her pleasures,
And Faith, Love, and Peace, fill the world with their treasures.

No. II.

ABSTRACT FROM LETTER TO "JOHN H. FORBES, ESQ.," VINDICATING THE CLAIM OF THE RUTHWELL SAVINGS BANK TO THE TITLE OF "THE PARENT INSTITUTION," REFERRED TO AT PAGE 111.

THERE is yet another subject on which you compel me, with extreme reluctance, to say a few words; but, as it is altogether of a personal nature, and tends to no practical result, I shall not waste a single sentence on it, that is not absolutely necessary for my own vindication. Could I have avoided it, without appearing, by my silence, to stand self-convicted of having made unjustifiable pretensions, I should have been spared one of the most painful and delicate tasks which can be assigned to any individual. It is true, you use the language of a gentleman, and do not directly accuse me of disingenuousness; but, what amounts to nearly the same thing, you attack the Editor of the Quarterly Review, for having given credit to my statement of *facts*; which statement you controvert, and endeavour to disprove. Your object is, to show that the Edinburgh Bank for Savings, of which you were the chief promoter, is the *Parent Institution*, having "first brought the scheme forward so practically, and recommended it so efficiently to public notice, as to have ensured the progressive adoption, and ultimate success, of similar institutions throughout the empire;" and that I have unwarrantably arrogated this title to the Ruthwell Bank, because, "had not the novelty of *your* proceedings awakened public attention, the Ruthwell Bank, in all probability, would have still remained nearly as much unknown now, as it had been during the four years subsequent to its establishment, and previous to the exertions of *your* society;" and, because, "although the Ruthwell Bank had never existed,

the system would have been just as extensively known as it is at this day."

Now, I cannot bring myself to engage in the invidious task of drawing a comparison between your efforts and my own, in the establishment of Banks for Savings. I believe both of us have exerted ourselves in this work to the best of our abilities; and I am quite ready to own, that your station in society, and your mental accomplishments, as well as your residence in the metropolis, have given you means and facilities which were far beyond the reach of one in my humble and remote situation, who can lay no other claim to public notice than the wish to do good. With the defence of the article in the Quarterly Review, I have no concern. I do not feel myself called on to contend with you about any thing so very unimportant, and so difficult accurately to ascertain, as the precise share which the Ruthwell Institution, compared with that at Edinburgh, has actually had in promoting the establishment of Banks for Savings. On this subject, those who think it worth their while to give it any consideration, will probably always remain in doubt; as it seems impossible to enter minutely into the private sentiments and feelings of those who were instrumental in giving practical effect to the system in different parts of the kingdom; or to discover whether the authority of the respectable names which sanctioned your bank, or the successful result of an experiment carried on for four years with the express and avowed intention of paving the way for the general introduction of the plan, was most effectual in engaging the public attention. My sole object—and I wish this to be distinctly understood—is to free myself from the imputation of unfairness; and, with this view, I shall show that, in giving to the Ruthwell Bank for Savings the designation of the *Parent Institution*, I did not injuriously usurp for it a title which belonged to another, as it was, at the time when my Essay was first published, the *only* establishment to which this appellation was applicable. By fixing your attention to this simple point, which is sufficient for my now justification, I shall avoid much painful and unprofit-

able discussion, and bring the question at issue between us, into a narrow compass. The only thing that seems requisite, indeed, is a simple recapitulation of the circumstances which preceded the publication of the Essay containing the obnoxious title.

In the history of the institution, which I have already published, there is a short account of the steps taken by me to introduce the scheme to general notice; and there is one statement in that account against which you solemnly protest. It is as follows:—"Meanwhile, as the system was silently working its way in the parish, and gradually rising to consequence, the time was fast approaching when the experiment might be considered to be complete. It happened that one of the heritors of Ruthwell,* who was an extraordinary member of the Bank, was also a member of the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity, and this gentleman communicated to that most respectable and charitable body, a copy of the regulations of the Ruthwell Institution, together with such notices of its success as had been transmitted to him. This was during the currency of the year 1813, when the scheme had begun to make rapid advances in the parish, and to exhibit the most flattering proofs of its utility." †

This statement you do not hesitate to meet with a "flat contradiction," and in opposition to it, you declare that you had never heard of the existence of the Ruthwell Bank, till you had formed and digested your plan, and even, so far as your memory serves you, till the Edinburgh Bank was actually opened. ‡ This information is quite new to me; but, coming from so respectable a quarter, I cannot refuse it implicit credit. All that remains for me, therefore, is to state the grounds on which the assertions in the above quoted passage were made, leaving it to you and the public, to judge how far they go towards my ex-

* J. Farquhar Gordon, Esq. W S.

† In the first edition of the Essay, it is said that the Edinburgh Bank was instituted "on the principle of the Parish Bank, and with the assistance of the Ruthwell regulations;" but this expression was left out in the second edition.

‡ Letter to the Editor of the Quarterly Review, p. 17.

culpation from the charge you indirectly bring against me, of wilful misrepresentation.

Referring you to my Essay, for a short account of the steps taken by me for the establishment of Banks for Savings in the county of Dumfries, in the year 1810,—between three and four years before the Institution at Edinburgh was thought of;—and in particular, requesting your attention to the fact, that in the month of May of that year, the Ruthwell Bank was founded, "more from the conviction that it was the best means in my power of ultimately introducing the system to general notice, than from very sanguine views of benefit to my own parishioners;" * I beg leave explicitly to state, that, from this period, I turned my thoughts very anxiously and unremittingly to the future extension of the scheme. With this view, I brought the Institution before the eyes of the public, by explaining its nature and object in an extensively circulated newspaper; † and corresponded on the subject with such benevolent individuals as I thought might be eventually induced to give it their support, in

* Essay, second edition, p. 34.

† What my views and hopes at that time were, will appear from the following quotations from two of the earliest of my letters, inserted in the Newspapers. In my first communication, published on the first of May 1810, there is the following passage:—"The poor-rates are well characterised, when they are said to be a tax upon industry for the support of idleness; but we might perhaps have a still more accurate view of their evil tendency, were we to consider them as a bribe to the industrious to become idle. My chief design in addressing you, at present, is to lay before the public a scheme, which cannot fail, I should hope, to produce an effect the very reverse of this, and to operate as a bribe to the idle to become industrious. Any proposal of this kind, I am persuaded, will be listened to by the liberal and enlightened with interest; and, if it shall appear likely to produce the desired end, will be eagerly adopted." In a paper on the same subject, published a few weeks afterwards, are the following words:—"Had such Institutions been established forty or fifty years ago, and had the lower classes been induced to take advantage of them, how different might have been the situation of individuals, and of the country, at this moment! In looking forward, therefore, to the effect that they may produce on the good morals and happiness of future generations, what a delightful prospect opens to the contemplation of the benevolent mind!" &c. It is pleasing to think how much has already been done to realise these early anticipations.

their respective districts. This was all that I conceived to be either prudent or useful, till I had it in my power incontrovertibly to prove, from experience, that it was no longer a matter of doubtful theory, but had actually, under very favourable circumstances, been successfully reduced to practice. Matters remained in this state until the year 1813, and "as the system was silently working its way in the parish, and gradually rising to consequence, the time was fast approaching, when the experiment might be considered to be complete." * Sometime in that year, at what precise period I cannot at this distance of time recollect, but certainly two or three months before the opening of the Edinburgh Bank, I received a letter from Mr Farquhar Gordon, the gentleman alluded to in the quotation, informing me that it was the intention of the Society for the Suppression of Beggars, of which he was a member, to establish a Bank for the Savings of the industrious, similar to that instituted at Ruthwell, and requesting that I would furnish him with such facts as had come under my own observation, tending to prove the usefulness and practicability of the scheme, that he might lay them before the society, with the view of promoting its establishment in that quarter. With this request, it will readily be supposed, I instantly complied.†

* Essay, second edition, p. 36.

† On the 19th of the present month (April 1817), after the above passage was written, and the first two sheets of this publication were in the press, I received a packet from Mr Farquhar Gordon, inclosing the identical letter above alluded to as sent by me in reply to his inquiries. It is dated 3*d November* 1813, and the Edinburgh Bank was not opened, according to your own account, till the 25*th January* 1814. It appears, therefore, that my recollections on this subject are quite correct. This letter had actually been communicated *to you* by Mr Gordon, and had remained in your possession till the 15th inst., when, after a personal communication with that gentleman, you returned it to him. In the letter accompanying it, which you addressed to him, and which he, I presume by your permission, was so good as to transmit to me, you state that you had entirely forgot that you ever had any communication with him on the subject, till he, within these few days, called the circumstance to your recollection; and you conjecture, but certainly without any grounds whatever, and contrary to all probability, that my letter was not put into your hands till after the opening of your Bank, nearly three months after it had been received by Mr Gordon. Is it consistent

Early in the subsequent year, I heard that the experiment was actually begun; but during the currency of that year, more than one correspondent wrote to me in very desponding terms, with regard to the prospect of success, attributing the backwardness of the people in taking advantage of the facilities offered to them, to the unfortunate circumstance of the scheme being associated in their minds with the suppression of beggary. Whatever may have been the cause, indeed, the fact is certain, that up to the publication of the 2d report of the Anti-mendicant Society, about the middle of December 1814, in which the first account of the progress of your Savings Bank was given,

with common sense to suppose that Mr Gordon, after obtaining important information from me, for which he had earnestly applied, with the view of advancing the object of the proposed Institution, should have withheld that information, till it could no longer be of any use? Your own opinion must go for nothing, in the present instance, as you did not even recollect that you had ever had any communication with Mr Gordon on the subject. It further appears, that the Ruthwell regulations must have been communicated to you even *before* my letter, because they were certainly not sent along with it, and had you not previously seen them, my letter would have scarcely been intelligible. Mr Gordon, as a member of the Ruthwell Bank, must have been in possession of these regulations for some years, and had probably transmitted them to you some time before. The candid manner in which you gave up my letter, the moment you discovered it to be in your possession, deserves my thanks. It is to me an invaluable document, as it shows on what grounds I formed the opinion that the Edinburgh Bank was aided in its formation by the use of the Ruthwell regulations. As my only wish is to vindicate myself from a charge of wilful misrepresentation, the date of this letter would have answered the purpose, whether it had ever been communicated to you or not; but as circumstances have turned out, I cannot help saying, that before you met my statement with a "flat contradiction," you should have been well assured of the accuracy of your own recollections. That Mr Gordon put the Ruthwell regulations, along with my letter, into your hands, *for the purpose of getting them communicated to the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity*, there can be no doubt:—That they never reached their destination was certainly not *his* fault but *yours*. You will readily allow, that I had reason to trust you would not treat Mr Gordon's letter with the neglect you have confessedly done; and assuredly you had no right, under these circumstances, to meet my statement with a "flat contradiction." Your treacherous memory can scarcely be sustained as a sufficient excuse, where so grave a charge is preferred. The veracity of no individual should be lightly called in question.

nothing like a general interest had been excited in favour of your plan, in the metropolis; and the very existence of that branch of the Institution was scarcely known to the public. That report states the number of persons who had made deposits in the Bank, since its commencement, only at *one hundred and six*, a number which certainly held out no flattering prospect of extensive usefulness, considering the immense population on which an effect was intended to be produced.

Keeping still in view, that my only object, in these statements, is to vindicate myself from the charge of disingenuousness in adopting, for the Ruthwell Bank, the title of the *Parent Institution*, it will be necessary to mention, with more minuteness than I thought necessary in the Essay, the steps that were taken by me in the year 1814, to prepare the public mind for the general introduction of the system. In the month of March of that year, I published, in the Dumfries and Galloway Courier,* a series of papers, giving a new detail of the Ruthwell plan, and recapitulating what I had formerly published, relative to the principles of the Institution, and the benefits likely to be derived from its general adoption. Many copies of these papers were, immediately afterwards, printed separately, and circulated in all directions, one of which was sent to the editor of the Cheap Magazine in Haddington, (a work which was very extensively read among the lower classes,) with a request that it might be inserted in an early number. This request was soon afterwards complied with.

In the meantime, Mr Lundie, minister of Kelso, whose

* The Edinburgh and London Newspapers gave general publicity to my account of the Ruthwell scheme, and my comments on the good which might result from its universal adoption; and in consequence of this, I received letters of inquiry from various quarters, not only in Scotland, but even so far off as the south of England. There is now on my table a letter addressed to me from *Ashford in Kent*, in the month of March 1814, by a gentleman with whom I was totally unacquainted, requesting information on the subject. At this time there were not more than from twenty to twenty-eight depositors in the Edinburgh Savings Bank.

heart is always alive to every thing connected with the interests of humanity, had been using means to diffuse a knowledge of the Ruthwell scheme in his own parish and neighbourhood; and in the month of October of that year, I set out to fulfil a promise I had long made this gentleman, of being present at the first meeting convened for the formation of a Bank for Savings in Kelso. In passing through Hawick, I, very unexpectedly, met with an extremely gratifying proof of the publicity which had already been given to my scheme, and of the interest which the country were beginning to take in it. Happening to go into a bookseller's shop, I cast my eyes upon some sheets, just come from the press, and you may easily guess my surprise and pleasure, when I discovered that they contained the regulations of the Ruthwell Bank, to which was prefixed the detailed account of the nature and success of the Institution, already mentioned as printed for circulation in the month of March. On questioning the bookseller, I was informed that he had reprinted these papers by order of the gentlemen of Selkirkshire, who, at a county meeting, had resolved to take this method of recommending the scheme to general adoption in their district. I afterwards learned that copies of these papers had been communicated to one of the leading men in the county, by my very active, intelligent, and benevolent friend, Charles Oliphant, Esq., W.S., with whom I had previously corresponded on the subject. Cheered by this good omen, I proceeded on my journey; and, on the 3d Nov.* I had the happiness of seeing the foundation laid of the "Kelso Friendly Bank Society," at a most respectable meeting, at which his Grace the Duke of Roxburghe presided. A full account of this meeting was published in all the papers, with remarks and explanations relative to the nature of the Institution, and appears to me to have given

* You date the commencement of the Kelso Bank from the 7th January following, when, after the necessary arrangements, it was first opened for the reception of deposits. Considering the nature of the question, is this quite fair?

the first remarkable public stimulus to the system. Whilst I remained in Kelso, steps had been taken by some very public-spirited inhabitants of Hawick, to prepare the people of that manufacturing town for the establishment of a Parish Bank; and, on my way back to Dumfriesshire, I was so fortunate as to be present at a numerous popular meeting, in which the scheme was enthusiastically approved of and adopted. When I reached home I found a letter lying for me, dated 28th October, from a very ingenious young gentleman in Fisherrow, requesting a copy of the Ruthwell regulations, with the view of setting on foot a similar establishment in that place. This was the first step taken in the formation of the Musselburgh Parish Bank. Before the *end of the year* I had received applications of a similar kind from almost every quarter of Scotland. I may, particularly, mention Eskdale, Galloway, Ayrshire, Haddingtonshire, the Lothians, Perthshire, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Berwick. Letters from benevolent individuals in all these places are now before me; and, on re-perusing them, I find that they refer exclusively to Ruthwell, as the *Parent* Institution; and that the "Loan Fund and Savings Bank Branch" of the Edinburgh Society is *not once mentioned* in any *one* of these communications.

It may not be improper to state, that having, on my return from Kelso, communicated to Principal Baird—with whom I had, from the preceding month of September,*

* As you allege that the account I give of Dr Baird's inquiries respecting my proceedings in September 1814, is a proof of the want of "notoriety in the Ruthwell Bank at an earlier period," I subjoin that gentleman's letter to me, which will distinctly show his object in the application; and, at the same time, prove that the Edinburgh Institution had, at that time, made little or no impression on his mind, as he never once alludes to it :—

"*Ramsay-Lodge, Edinburgh, 20th Sept.* 1814.

"REV. DEAR SIR,—I have seen in the newspapers some notices of a Parish Bank established successfully in Ruthwell. May I request you to have the goodness to inform me as to the nature and effects of the establishment; as I would be desirous to take it for a model in setting some similar plan on foot in a parish in Perthshire, with which I happen to be connected. I am, &c. &c. GEO. H. BAIRD."

On the 27th of the same month I received another letter from Prin-

carried on a very active correspondence—an account of my journey, I received from him a very gratifying reply, dated the 15th November, of which the following is an extract:—

"Your letter came most opportunely. The annual meeting of the Society for Suppressing Beggars, &c. &c., was to be held that forenoon. It had been left to me, accidentally, to move a vote of thanks to the managers of one of its branches—'The Loan Fund and Savings Bank.'* You will believe that my mind was too much pleased with the intelligence put, but a few minutes before, into my hands, to suffer me to conceal it on that occasion. I took, in fact, the liberty of reading part of your first letter as to the effects of the Bank, and the greater part of your *last*, as to the proceedings of the county of Selkirk, &c. I told, too, the plan I had formed of endeavouring *to imitate you* in a Perthshire parish, the progress I had made, and the influence I had secured for giving efficiency to the scheme of rendering Parish Banks universal in the county of Perth, and, I trusted, universal in Scotland:—'Since,' said I, 'gentlemen from many different counties are here, I invite them to give their thoughts to the subject, and my feeble co-operation shall be at all times ready, in humble subserviency to their labours, in so good a cause. The appeal has not been made without effect, several gentlemen having been with me to-day on the subject,'" &c.

It is quite unnecessary to make any comments on this letter, it speaks so plainly for itself; but I cannot help adding, that it was at the repeated and pressing solicitation of this excellent individual, that I adopted for the Ruthwell Bank the title of "Parent Institution," against

cipal Baird, which he begins thus:—"I have received very sincere gratification from the communication with which you have favoured me, as to your Parish Bank, and my zealous efforts shall be immediately directed to follow your meritorious example, in the parish to which I alluded formerly."

* It is a fact worthy of notice, that, although I had received several letters from Dr Baird, this is the first time that he alluded to the existence of this branch of the Edinburgh Society; which can only be accounted for from the little progress it had then made.

which you so strenuously object! To him I submitted the manuscript of the first edition of my Essay, and it was in his hands *previous to the publication of the first report of the society relative to your Savings Bank*, though a few weeks of delay took place before it issued from the press, during which I took occasion to insert some information contained in the report, particularly that relative to the existence of Banks for Savings at West Calder and Alloa.

This leads me to take notice of an assertion contained in your letter to the Editor of the Quarterly Review, respecting the date of the publication of my Essay, for which I cannot easily account. You say, "Our report had been before the public fully *three months* preceding the publication of that Essay. The Report of the Highland Society also preceded it." Now, by referring to dates, it will be found that you are mistaken in both these particulars, especially in the former. Your Report was not published till the second week of December, and my Essay * appeared on the 10th of January; so that, in fact, there was not more than *one* month between the two publications. The Report of the Highland Society was published contemporaneously with my Essay, or, at least, did not precede it more than a day or two. This appears by a letter to me from Dr Baird, dated the 10th January, announcing that my publication had issued from the press, in which he says:—"The Highland Society's † Report was sent me

* 1500 copies of my Essay were thrown off, the greater part of which were sold in a few weeks. Only 100 copies of the Report relative to the Loan Fund and Savings Bank were printed separately. What the sale of the whole Report was I have not been able to learn.

† In justice to this most meritorious body, I am bound to state, that I afterwards received a letter of acknowledgment from their secretary, of which the following is a copy:—

"*Highland Society's Chambers, Edinburgh, 14th Jan.* 1815.

"SIR,—I have it in charge from the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, on Saving or Parish Banks, to transmit to you the accompanying copy of their Report on that subject, and am desired, at same time, to say that the Committee derived considerable advantage from a perusal of the account of an establishment of this sort, instituted by you several years ago, in the parish of Ruthwell. I have the honour to be, &c. LEWIS GORDON, *D. Sec.*"

to-night. The Ruthwell Bank is not recognised there as the *Parent* Institution; but I am resolved still that it shall be so. I have not forgot the ancient definition of *Justitia.*" *

That you may understand the full import of these words, I must mention, that even before the publication of your Report, an anxiety had been evinced, by some persons in Edinburgh, to underrate, as much as possible, the previous exertions made by me for introducing the scheme to general notice, lest the success of these exertions should appear to militate against the plea intended to be set up in favour of your establishment. Who these individuals were I have no means of knowing, nor do I wish to inquire; but I have no doubt of the fact; as letters which I received from Edinburgh at that date, were I at liberty to make them public, would fully prove it. Now nothing most assuredly could be more preposterous than any attempt to arrogate to the "Edinburgh Loan Fund and Savings Bank' the merit of being the "Parent Institution" *at that period.* In whatever degree your bank may have *since* contributed to the success of the system, and I am most ready to allow that it has contributed much; yet, under circumstances as they *then* stood, to pretend that it had made any effectual attempt to excite the public interest, would be quite ridiculous. Principal Baird felt this strongly, and, in the honest indignation of an upright mind, had resolved to stand forward publicly in defence of the Ruthwell Institution, with all the weight which would have been attached to his name. With this view he had even framed a letter†

* I think it proper to remark, that the interest which Dr Baird so warmly expressed in my favour, derived none of its strength from the partiality of personal friendship, but was founded entirely on his innate love of justice. We are not even *personally* acquainted, and, to this day, have never met.

† The following is a copy of the letter which Dr Baird intended to have prefixed to the first edition of my Essay. He transmitted it to me at the time in consequence of my remonstrances against the publication of it. I hope the necessity of the case will excuse this and other liberties which I have taken with his correspondence. I wrote to him twice since I received your pamphlet, stating my wish to make use of his letters for

to me, to be prefixed to the first edition of my Essay, the printing of which he was so obliging as to superintend. This letter he did not intend me to see till it should be published. I, however, received some intimation of his generous intention, and strongly remonstrated against it, because I did not feel the same anxiety to assert my own claim, as the friendly zeal of my much-valued correspondent excited in his mind, and because I shrunk from the agitation of a question which might have given rise to hurtful altercation. Had I anticipated any such altercation from the adoption of the title of "Parent Institution," convinced though I am that it is just, I would have rejected it. You will observe that it is dropped in the second edition of my Essay. Before leaving this subject permit me to add, that though you are so candid as to allow that, in

my own vindication, and earnestly requesting to hear from him on the subject; but as no answer has reached me, I presume he is not at home:—

"DEAR SIR,—You will not see this letter till you see it in print; and I have to apologise to you for printing and prefixing it to your pamphlet without your previous knowledge of what its contents were to be.

"I have had an opportunity of doing so, you are aware, from your having put the manuscript of the pamphlet into my hands, and from your having left to me, owing to your distance from Edinburgh, the charge of getting it printed and published.

"My inducement to take the unusual step I have done, and for which I am apologising, was this:—I was anxious to do justice, in this public manner, to what I conceive to be your merits, in this interesting case of Parish Banks.

"From considerable acquaintance with the constitution and history of charitable institutions, in both England and Scotland, I feel myself confident in affirming, that though some establishments, similar in principle and on a smaller scale, had been founded, yet, that the Parish Bank of Ruthwell, which originated in your suggestion, was the *first* Parish Bank which was organised by minutely digested and published regulations, and was brought into practical operation with extensive and beneficial effect.

"You have thus, I am satisfied, the credit of having founded, in a leading degree, the commencement of a great and useful system of institutions, which promise to produce, hereafter, incalculable advantage to your country. The pleasing consciousness of this circumstance must be to you a gratifying reward; but you must forgive the partiality of a friend, who is desirous, by this voluntary testimony, to attach, in the public estimation, that honour to your character, which a knowledge of the fact I have mentioned cannot fail to attach to it. I remain, dear sir," &c.

the Parish Bank established by Principal Baird at Clunie, he preferred the Ruthwell scheme to yours, you have not thought proper to mention that, in the preface to his regulations, he expressly recognises the Ruthwell Bank as the "Parent Institution." You will now see with what justice Dr Baird is stated, by the Reviewers, to have differed from you, with regard to the claim set up for Edinburgh in opposition to Ruthwell; and, in whatever way the public may decide the question, it is no small satisfaction to me to think that I did not adopt the offensive title without the disinterested approbation and advice of one of the most active and intelligent directors of the Institution on which your Savings Bank was grafted.

From this induction of particulars it seems to be quite impossible to avoid the conclusion, that the first impulse was given to the public mind by the Ruthwell Bank, entirely independent of the Institution whose cause you so zealously advocate, and at a time when that newly engrafted branch of the Anti-mendicant Society was in a languishing condition. It also appears that although *you* conceived the first idea of forming the Edinburgh establishment from reading the reports of the "Society for bettering the condition of the poor," other members of your society derived their zeal and encouragement, in a great measure, from the information they had received of what had already been successfully done in Ruthwell. I presume, therefore, you will now be inclined to retract the contemptuous assertion you make, that, "*had it not been for your establishment, the Ruthwell Bank would, at this moment, have remained almost unheard of, and that the system of Banks for Savings would have been just as extensively established, had that Institution never existed.*" But, be this as it may, I hope I have at least effected the only object which I proposed to myself, that of convincing you and the public, that in assuming for the Ruthwell Bank the title of *Parent Institution*, I was actuated by no motive so totally unworthy as a senseless and grasping vanity.

No. III.

NOTICE OF DR DUNCAN'S DEATH, FROM SAVINGS BANK MAGAZINE, FURNISHED BY JOHN MAITLAND, ESQ., OF THE EDINBURGH NATIONAL SECURITY SAVINGS BANK, AND REFERRED TO IN CONNEXION WITH DR DUNCAN'S GEOLOGICAL RESEARCHES AT PAGE 183.

" *Death of the Rev. Henry Duncan, D.D.*

"THIS venerable and faithful man died in the forty-seventh year of his ministry, at his parish of Ruthwell, in Dumfriesshire, on the 12th February last.

"To the public, Dr Duncan is best known as having first conceived and brought into operation a Savings Bank, minutely organized, and with comprehensive ulterior views, which he fully explained through the press in 1810. His labours are thus noticed in Pratt's 'History of Savings Banks:'—'His (Dr D.'s) zeal was applauded, but his recommendation was neglected. Steady, however, in the pursuit of the benefit which he anticipated from it, he resolved to bring his plan to the test of experiment by such an establishment in his own parish. To this he gave the name of The Parish Bank Friendly Society of Ruthwell. Its capital amounted at the time of publishing the Second Edition of his Essay to a sum exceeding L.1400.'

"Dr Duncan's zeal was from the first applauded by many, but this applause was not unmixed with expressions of disapprobation, that resulted from narrow views. The confidence he enjoyed as a faithful and devoted minister, however, enabled Dr Duncan to succeed in convincing the poor of his parish at least; so that the Ruthwell Savings Bank succeeded to admiration from its very commencement.

"Dr Duncan followed out his Sabbath instructions by in-

cessant and varied week-day labours amongst his people, but notwithstanding this, he found also some time for the pursuits of literature and science. His Tracts are still much read in Scotland, and his 'Philosophy of the Seasons' will continue to be so. To men of science he is known by his geological discoveries.*

"When the hard trial of the faith and constancy of the clergy of the Established Church of Scotland came to a crisis in 1843, he, as might have been anticipated, adhered to his principles, and died an esteemed minister of the Free Church."

* "He was not only the first to point out traces of now extinct animals on the strata of former eras, but he at once also appreciated the *importance* of these traces as geological phenomena."

[The footnote originated with Dr Chalmers, to whom Mr Maitland had submitted the original draft of this notice. On its being returned he found the following append ed for insertion in the handwriting of the venerable Doctor, from which the above was altered. "Dr Duncan was the first who discovered traces of the footsteps of now extinct animals in the strata of former eras, and fully appreciated the importance of these geological phenomena to the science. Neither for this, though in every respect a great and original discovery, did he obtain the credit to which he was entitled."

The letter that accompanied this return, which, with the original MS., is now, by Mr Maitland's kindness, in possession of the writer, says, "The notice is excellent, and I rejoice in it as an act of justice to Dr Duncan." Such a proof of the sensitiveness of the venerable Chalmers to the fame of Dr Duncan as a literary and philanthropic compatriot, is too gratifying to be left unrecorded. G. J. C. D.]

THE END.

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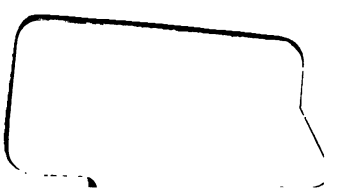
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